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MEMOIRS OF A LADY IN WAITING



BY MRS F. AYLMER.

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BY
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MEMOIRS

OF

A LADY IN WAITING.

CHAPTER I.

"There is but the flitting moment wherein to enjoy,
But in the calendar of memory that moment is all time."
TUPPER'S *Proverbial Philosophy*.

How strange it is to look back upon the past; the often mentioned "long ago" of our lives; to take a retrospective view of all the trials and troubles that saddened our hearts, and made life seem so heavy a burthen. Do we think those trials so heavy now, when time has shown us the heart's real strength, and made us own that trials are often, in reality, "glances of God's watchful eye?" Do we not wonder how we could weep over such trifling matters?

Ah! it is too true, life begins with trifles. Some one has said—"Sorrows grow with us to perfect maturity, and then having attained their climax, lose their strength as we do ours, till at last they become almost pleasant, drawing us closer to our rest."

I have found this true, and think most very old people will say so too; but I am wandering away. I

was talking of *thinking*, or rather dreaming, of the past.

I dream over it a good deal, and in the quiet evening I draw my arm-chair in front of the fire, and clasping a little precious case of relics belonging to my "long ago," I sit down to enjoy my dream. I conjure up bright scenes in the merry blaze, and hear the echo of happy laughter in the crackling coals. It is very sad, and yet very pleasant ; so pleasant, indeed, that I would not forego that half hour of quiet thought for all the gay doings of the merry world.

I love the remembrance of my young days, the young days too of friends, some of whom are dead, some gone far away, and some so changed that I thank God I can remember their childhood, and thus bear with their present condition, for the past sheds its unchanging halo round all and each.

I am an old woman, a very old woman, and an old cripple, too ; so, dear reader, if you would like to learn what I have seen before the former came to pass, you must bear with an old fashioned, and, perhaps, rather prosy individual ; and when you tire do not tire your friends also by abusing my story, but rather let them judge for themselves.

I cannot exactly say why I have begun to tell you of my firelight dreams, but since I have done so I shall go on, dating my story from the second of November, that being the anniversary of my birthday ; and as it is a very cold evening, with snow upon the ground, and a blustering wind blowing against the window, I think no one will interrupt me ; so I may tell my

story as slowly as I like, and, as the old song has it—

“Laugh when I’m merry and sigh when I’m sad.”

I do not think I should remember that particular birthday had it not been for an event which happened on it. It was also the birthday of my nurse, a cross, ugly old woman, who, having been my grandmother’s and then my dear mother’s maid until I was born, thought she might say or do anything she pleased, and used to scold us all, even my mother.

Upon this birthday she was more than usually cross, and hardly said “thank you” for a beautiful chintz dress, all over roses and tulips, which my father had bought in Holland, at my mother’s express wish, for this day. I was sitting beside the toilet-table when the present was given, and saw a flush rise to my mother’s cheek, as nurse grumbled out a sort of acknowledgment. My father soon came into the room, holding his hat, with its beautiful white plume almost touching the carpet, and looking so handsome and merry, that no wonder my mother ran up to him, and, blushing with pride, kissed him over and over again. I all the time stood looking on gravely, and thinking how beautiful they both were. He took nurse’s old wrinkled hand in his, and wished her a happy year; to which she replied, “Not much chance of that,” with a sort of smile, which I thought made her look more ugly than ever. My father only laughed, and said something in French, which seemed to make my mother sad, even though she laughed mightily and pinched his cheek. After he and nurse had both gone away she

laid her head down upon the table for a long time, and I heard her say, "Oh God! help me to bear all these things for thy dear sake, for all is right that Thou orderest!" Soon after, while she was teaching me to say a little hymn, my father returned. Now he was flushed and angry, and before he spoke he caught me up in his arms, and holding me over his head, let me twist my fingers in his glossy ringlets; then suddenly he looked grave, and opening the door, he put me out of the room, bidding me go to nurse. I did not happen to be pleased with this speedy ending to my usual game of fun with my merry father, and particularly being sent off to cross old nurse; so as the door closed I sat down with my fingers in my mouth, and began to cry heartily.

I had not sat long when I heard a deep sob in the room, and a cry which sounded like my mother's. My own sobs were checked in a moment, and with open ears I listened for what would come next, but I listened in vain, and growing weary, I fell fast asleep. I do not know how long I slept, but it must have been a long time, for the light was fading away, and I felt cold and stiff. I was awakened by a pale, sad looking lady lifting me in her arms, and, in spite of my half shy, half petted struggles, holding me close to her breast. I then saw there was another and prettier lady with her, who stood back and looked surprised at the kind manner of the other. As they spoke in French, I could not understand any words except one which I knew meant king.

The sound of their voices low as it was must have

reached my father's ears, for we had not stood many moments when he opened the door ; at first he looked pale and lifted up his dark eyebrows, as he always did when anything surprised him, but, when the lady who held me, turned round, he grew very red, starting back at the same time, but suddenly changing he looked very pleased, and falling on one knee seized her hand, which the lady held out, and commenced speaking very fast, growing so excited, that I began to think he would cry.

I think the lady thought so too, for she put me into her companion's arms and said—"Poor child ! I cannot hold you any more."

Then as I was carried away, I saw her lay her hand upon my father's head, and lean against the door, but I was hurried away, and could see no more, and, child like, very soon forgot all that had happened in a romping game at hide-and-seek, amongst the great old-fashioned chairs in one of our large drawing-rooms.

I was still laughing wildly when the door opened, and my father led in the pale lady ; I ran up and seizing her hand looked in her face.

I suppose she remembered being a little girl, and that little girls liked to be petted, for she lifted me in her arms and kissed me, saying as she put me down, "I was very like my dear mother," for which I said "thank you, madam," and made a low curtsy, such as a merry friend of my mother's had taught me ; the lady smiled kindly and said, I was a "courtly little dame," and should be a maid of honour ! After saying this, she let my father lead her through the open window into the garden, where they spoke for a few moments, he

seeming to request something she would not grant ; at last he knelt down and kissed her hand, remaining still kneeling while the lady seemed to float away, at least I can call it by no other name, so gracefully did she move out of my sight.

The next moment I was clinging round my father's neck, pulling his hair, and telling him how merry I had been with the pretty lady with the fair hair, and that she had told me I was not half so pretty, and had not half such blue eyes as he had, at which he laughed much and bid me tell my mother, which I now remember I forgot to do, but said at the time I would ; and then he sent me to nurse, telling me not to take the pet again or I should not ride on his back or have any more fun for a long time, so promising to be good I ran off brim full of news, and never caring anything for cross looks, when I had so much to unburden my mind of. It was one, two, three and a jump along the oak corridor, and then dash against the great nursery door.

That night when the hour came at which the servants all met us in the great hall, and the chaplain read prayers, I saw a man I had never seen before : his face made me shudder and draw closer to my mother than my wont was, keeping my face close upon her arm.

He was on the other side, and there was an expression of hatred and contempt upon her dear face which till then I could not have believed possible. Young as I was, I noticed with what repugnance she avoided meeting his eye, and seemed to recoil when he offi-

ciously attempted to pick up a glove she had dropped.

It was one my father had given her, and which she valued both for the giver and the costliness of the work, yet even there before all the servants she would not touch it, but desired her woman to carry it away. I wondered, but thought she perhaps wished to save them. Besides the man had very dirty hands.

My father being absent, after the servants had according to their custom wished my mother "God's blessing and good night," she, as the last left the room, went up to the chaplain and spoke a word or two in a whisper, then she turned to the stranger and made one of those stately bows, which at the time I speak of were the fashion amongst the great. She next grasped my hand and led me away holding my poor fingers so tight as to bring the tears to my eyes : but not a word would I say, no, not though a large diamond ring she wore cut me almost to the bone, and I saw the blood drop upon my dress. I have the scar upon my forefinger yet, and can almost fancy I feel the clutch of the fair little hand now. Oh ! how she sobbed and cried when she saw my hand was hurt, talking to herself of bad omens ; her woman had sad work to quiet her, but at last being exhausted with weeping, which I thought strange for so small a thing (though I knew afterwards that it was but the drop which had made the cup overflow), being quite tired out she let Margaret arrange her beautiful hair for the night, and sent her to tell nurse that I was to remain where I was.

After a little petting and talking I was laid in her soft comfortable bed, which I thought (and what little girl does not ?) far more delightful than my own, and that the permission to sleep there was recompence sufficient for all the cut fingers in the world. Just as I was dropping asleep, remembering I had not said my prayers, I sprung out of bed, and running up to my mother, who was sitting with her head resting on one hand, told her ; and after kissing her very often, I knelt down and said the little prayer she had taught me, ending with asking a blessing for my grandfather, whom, though I had never seen, or even known by any other name, I had been taught to love and pray for, since I first could speak. As I said, "Please bless my dear grandfather," I felt my mother's arm tremble, and she repeated the words in a low, strange voice ; but before I could think more, or ask the question that was trembling on my lips, I heard my father enter. In an instant he was kneeling beside me, his arms round us both, and his face buried in my mother's white dressing-gown. I said "Amen," and looked up ; he was shaking very much ; even his voice, as he joined me, trembled ; suddenly he raised his head and said —

"It is in vain, dearest ; hopeless—quite hopeless !"

"Is there not a shadow of a hope, Edward ?" asked my mother, speaking as if in great pain ; for she held her hands clasped all the time, and wrung them in agony as my father shook his head.

She leant back, and great tears rolled down her cheeks, which were as white as marble, her lips moving

as if she was praying. All at once she threw her arms round my father and said —

“ Oh ! Edward, they dare not kill him, my noble father ; he so gentle and so kind ; he who knelt to beg the poor king’s life ! Oh ! the son dare not consent to this wicked murder ! ” and she seemed too much excited even to breathe, still grasping my father’s neck, apparently unconscious that I was growing frightened, began sobbing bitterly, at which, gently disengaging her arms, he lifted me up, and after holding my face to the cold cheek of my poor mother, he laid me in bed and covered me carefully up, lingering as if he liked to look at me. He made me so comfortable, that in spite of my endeavours so stay awake and hear the end of what had already so much excited my curiosity, my eyes shut of their own accord, and though I opened them once or twice very angrily, I forgot everything and fell fast asleep.

It could not have been long after, when I awoke frightened and trembling from a horrible dream. Starting up, I saw to my great joy the light still burning, and my dear mother sitting in—the safest place in the world—my father’s arms. They were talking in a low voice, and after looking at them for a short time until I was at rest again, I lay down and fell to thinking of all sorts of things. My eyes were accidentally fixed upon the door, which I thought moved ; being rather frightened, I looked very hard, and presently it opened a little, and a hideous face looked in, so dark and horrible that I thought it must be the devil, and lay perfectly paralysed with fear,

expecting every moment he would appear bodily. The glaring eyes were looking towards my parents ; and as they spoke low, the face was thrust farther forward, so far as to become distinctly visible.

The spell was broken—I knew it was the stranger who had been at prayers, and like a pent-up stream my fear burst forth in a loud shriek, and springing up, I shouted—

“The man ! the man !”

In an instant both my parents were by my side, but it was long before I could make them comprehend what had frightened me. When they did, all trace of the cause was of course gone, and the door fast closed. But my father turned deadly pale as he looked towards my mother, who, as soon as she could make out who and what I had seen, had dropped my hand, and stood staring with wild eyes.

“Will they take you too ?” she gasped ; and then, hardly knowing what she said or did, she caught me in her arms and cried aloud—

“If they take you, Edward, this child will be an orphan, for the blow that parts your soul and body will unite *us* for ever in God’s heavenly kingdom.”

My father only hid his face and said—

“Oh ! my wife ! *that kingdom*—would it were ours ; any way to it, even the . . .”

“Hush ! hush ! for the love of heaven ! the word would kill me. Oh ! my child ! my child ! pray God you may go with us, for there is no rest or peace on earth.”

The fountain of her tears seemed dry ; but I would

rather have seen those torrents of tears which she had shed at the commencement of that fearful night, than heard the deep tearless sobs which now seemed to tear her breast, and even left a stain of blood upon her lips. My dear father led her away, this time sitting down out of sight of the door, and carefully locking it.

I was so worn out, between fear and excitement, that I fell asleep. Nor did I awake until the bright sun was shining into the room so cheerfully, that I could scarcely believe but that the scenes of the night before were only dreams.

CHAPTER II.

“His memory, like some holy light,
Kept alive in our hearts, will improve them,
For worth shall look fairer, and truth more bright,
When we think how he lived but to love them.”

MOORE.

I SHALL never forget that day, or how pale and troubled my poor mother was, and how she kept watching for my father, starting at every sound. As evening came, still without bringing him, I could see that after every false alarm she pressed her handkerchief to her forehead, till at last it became quite damp, and I was sent to bring a fresh one. The sun was just setting amid a haze of red and purple when the long expected step was heard.

With an exclamation of delight my mother ran to the hall, but a shade of disappointment passed over her face, for my father was accompanied by a handsome old man, who, looking kindly at her, took her hand, and without noticing me led her back to the drawing-room. What happened there I do not know, being sent off to my bed ; but I found out next day that my father was preparing to go on a foreign embassy, and that though my mother grieved to part with him, she kept always telling him how thankful she was, and that they could never thank my Lord Clarendon enough.

She helped to pack the great leather trunk, folding

everything with her own hands, and often, when she thought nobody was looking, holding the clothes to her lips until tears came ; then she would sigh and begin packing again.

My father was running backwards and forwards from the Court all day, and when night came looked so tired and worn out that my mother made him lie down and rest his head upon her lap, she all the while trying to talk cheerfully and keep back the bitter tears which I saw coming to her eyes.

At last midnight came, and, after kneeling down with us to ask God's protection during his journey, my beloved father went with my Lord Clarendon in a hired coach to the wharf where the ship lay ready to sail.

When he had fairly gone, my mother's courage gave way, and I thought she was dead, so long did the stupor last, but at length she clasped me in her arms and began to cry.

For three days she could not leave her bed ; but on the third, the pale lady, of whom I spoke before, came to her, and I noticed that when she left, my mother looked calmer and got up next morning at her usual hour, which showed me she must have derived great comfort from her kind visitor, who, when she returned, did not send me away as before, but allowed me to sit at my mother's feet and listen ; though I could not understand what was said, as they spoke in French, I saw the lady's words pleased my mother, and though her tears often came they were not so bitter, but rather appeared to soothe.

Time went by, and each day the comforter came, always alone and always at the same hour. Other people too used to call, both ladies and gentlemen, though of the latter she only seemed pleased with my Lord Clarendon, who was the father of one of our lady friends, the pretty but unhappy looking Duchess of York.

In spite of all this attention and kindness time passed wearily, my mother growing so thin and pale that the dear lady, who had made me call her Mistress Catherine, after much persuasion, made her promise to drive every day.

This driving had a sad end. One day, when going to the park, the coachman had to draw aside to make room for an immense procession. I, full of admiration and wonder at the horses, soldiers, and dresses, was gazing eagerly at the crowd, begging to know who they were, when I felt my waist grasped by my mother ; she dragged me back into the coach, and, to my utter consternation, flung open the door and sprung out. I heard her shriek, and saw the crowd open before her and then close again, waving to and fro like the sea. At last my mother was brought back in the arms of a tall young man, who laid her in the coach and then hurried away. Immediately after my Lord Clarendon came and got in beside us, pulling up the shutters as he ordered the coachman to drive home. I was very much afraid ; but the quiet eye that was fixed upon me kept me quiet, though the sobs swelled in my throat, so I sat holding my mother's hand and feeling utterly wretched, for I thought she had been

killed, and believed my Lord Clarendon knew it. Great, beyond all expression, was my joy when I saw her eyes open, and perceiving my Lord near her laid her head upon his arm, and began weeping ; while he, bending down, spoke in a low tone, not making mention of any name, I heard him say,—“ How like a saint he looked,” and that “ they would see him even more glorious again.”

To my great grief, I was not permitted to remain with my mother when we reached home, but sent to my dismal nursery, where I went supperless to bed, as punishment for asking nurse so many questions.

Altogether, the day was a sad and troubled one—one ever to be remembered in our family, and indeed in England ; for I found that a dreadful crime had been authorized by the Parliament, and to satisfy the private revenge of malignant enemies, a good old man, to whom no blame could be attached save choosing the side of the Parliament in the civil war, had been that day brought to the scaffold. Dear reader, that man was my grandfather, the good old General Okey, who, after years of exile, was betrayed by one he deemed his friend, brought to England as a traitor, and in spite of the earnest remonstrance of a few firm supporters, condemned to death. The certainty of his fate had been concealed from my mother, and thus she fell in the way of seeing the fulfilment of her fears.

I am telling you this now, dear reader, although I did not know it for a long time after ; but, to keep my story clear, I had better explain events as they happened. This event was what my father meant when

he said there was "no hope," and also explains my mother's grief. This, too, was the cause of my father's leaving England, he being so implicated in the petitions for my grandfather's pardon as to draw suspicion on himself.

A few nights after the sad day I have just been speaking of, I had gone to bed without, as usual, seeing my mother ; but knowing she was sure to come, I lay awake and watched nurse knitting until she fell asleep, and then, being very lonely, I began (as children very often do) to cry, hiding my face under the sheets. Gradually my tears ceased ; I began meditating whether I could not get up and steal away to my mother, when a hand lifted the sheet, and I saw my Lord Clarendon holding a small lamp, which threw a strange light upon his pale, sweet face.

I neither started nor spoke, but waited for him to say something, which he soon did, telling me to "be quiet and not awake her," meaning nurse, who was still sleeping. Putting my arms round his neck, I begged him to take me to my mother, and he answered by lifting me up, and with a noiseless step, which I thought very strange for such a tall man, carried me past nurse and along the corridor,—not, however, to my mother's room, but up a long flight of stairs, to a little room usually occupied by the chaplain ; here he knocked. The instant the door opened, the light dazzled my eyes ; but I knew whose arms were clasped round me, and, hiding my face, I clung delighted to my father's breast.

When I raised my head I saw he was so changed

that I hardly knew him. His beautiful hair and moustache had been cut off, and there was an ugly black patch across his cheek. Seeing my look of dismay, and perhaps fear, he set me down with an angry exclamation. But my lord put me in his arms again, saying—

“Edward, you are mad ; remember your disguise ; you may never see her again.”

My father groaned and held me in his arms again, and I could feel his heart throbbing against mine as he kissed me, whispering a prayer in my ear that God would watch over me and make me a comfort to my mother. This caused me to look up, expecting she was there ; but I only saw a tall man, who was leaning against the door with folded arms, and looking eagerly at me.

“She is not here, my pet,” whispered my father, “but you are going to her.”

Then he clenched his hand, and swore to have vengeance on the murderers of my grandfather.

But my lord stepped forward, and laying his hand upon his lips, said rather sternly—

“Edward, be silent ; this folly may bring us all to the scaffold.”

My father bit his lip, and looked in the kind friend's face with such a gaze of love and trust, that it has remained ever upon my memory, and ever will.

His eyes were still on my lord's face, when a sharp, low knock made us all start ; a side-door opened, and there stood Mistress Catherine.

She wore a large cloak thrown over a gay dress, and

her hood having fallen back, I saw a wreath of glittering jewels encircled her head.

My Lord Clarendon started, and, with a troubled face, remained perfectly still.

"Give me your child, my friend," she said, in her sweet voice, though it trembled much. "I could not trust them ; I came, and your wife is ready. Let me have her," she added hurriedly, "I promise to protect her ; she shall be mine ; you know I have no child."

"Heaven bless your Majesty," said my father, scarcely able to speak, as he laid me in her arms. "Oh, make her like . . ." here his voice gave way, and, covering his face, he sat silent.

A loud noise echoed through the house, while the great bell pealed fiercely. In an instant the lights were extinguished, and Mistress Catherine, carrying me in her arms, ran quickly down a long steep stair, at the bottom of which some one was waiting, to whom she spoke in a language I had never heard before, but only a few words, and then a gust of cold wind made me cling closer to her breast.

"Be patient, dear one," she whispered ; "rest, rest."

I lay still, being an obedient child, and also very frightened. Although I was small of my age my weight soon began to have effect. I could feel her arms trembling violently, while her breathing grew quick and loud. "Let me walk," I cried, trying to get down ; but she held me tight until she was quite exhausted, when she said—

"I believe I must put you on your poor bare feet."

The cold damp grass chilled me as I ran along ; we

came to a walk, the stones of which cut my feet, still I had a brave heart and went on. Presently a lamp shone before us, and in the dim light I saw we had reached a gate at which stood a coach, and in it I joyfully recognised my mother.

"Is all safe," she asked, speaking over my shoulder to Mistress Catherine.

"As far as human power can go ; but there is no time to lose."

"The Holy Virgin be with you, my friend."

With her own hands she closed the door, and bade the postilion go on. Looking up as the coach moved, I saw her standing alone, without any protection save her own pure, noble heart. In after years, when my mother spoke of it, she said she looked angelic as the pale light fell upon her bare head ; and that her eyes shone brighter than the stars above her. No wonder my dear mother thought this, for Mistress Catherine had risked all she held dear on earth to assist the innocent and wronged.

What a terrible night's drive that was,—first, from the agony of grief my mother took no pains to conceal, and then, from the wild storm of rain and wind which raged over the plains, and often threatened to burst open the frail shutters of the creaking old coach. Yet, in spite of storm and rain, on we went ; but, after some time it was evident our pace was slackening, until at last the horses stood still, and neither whip nor spur would induce them to move a step.

My poor mother put up with the lashes and oaths of the postilion for a long time, at last she could do so no

longer ; so, pulling aside one of the shutters, she called out she would sooner walk a thousand times. But the man was either deaf or did not wish to hear, for he still sat kicking and swearing until the poor beasts, having recovered their breath, made another start, and gaining a level piece of road went along quite briskly.

Daylight was now beginning to peep over the black looking hills, and every minute I could trace more distinctly the outline of the country. Oh ! what a bleak wild country it was,—low bare hills rising and falling on every side, separated by swampy hollows and dotted here and there with miserable stunted old trees, putting me in mind of the horrible German tales I used to delight in so much, about dwarfs who, when daylight came, changed themselves into just such trees, and stayed in bare places to induce the unwary traveller to take shelter under their branches. At night they would resume their former shapes, and after tormenting their victims in the most horrible manner, change them also into trees and put them to entice their friends to destruction, with no power left but to give vent to their feelings with sighs and groans only. So impressed was I with the reality of these tales, that I was not effectually quieted as long as I could see a bush or tree, and felt intense relief when they gave place to grey rocks and heathy hills.

We journeyed on, dawn getting brighter, until heralded by a whole army of red and purple clouds the bright sun burst forth over the horizon. Turning to my mother, I saw she was praying. “ Let me pray too, mother,” I said, and, clasping my hands, I repeated

my morning hymn. Then we both sat watching the ever changing tints of the dispersing clouds. I have seen many sunrises since, for I am an old-fashioned early riser ; but I do not think I ever felt so awe-stricken, or was so sensible of the overwhelming majesty of God. Even now, when I see a similar one, something of my old feeling comes back, and I fancy myself a wondering child again.

“What is that, mother ?” I asked, as after some of the clouds had risen and others had floated entirely out of sight, I noticed a dark blue line bounding the horizon.

My mother’s cheek grew red, as she answered in a more cheerful voice—

“It is the sea, my pet ; we have not far to go now.”

I then asked many questions, but gained little information, for she evaded them all ; and seeing she was too much occupied by her own thoughts to heed mine, was at last content to hold my tongue and wait patiently for the end of our journey to elucidate the mystery of the night.

I had not long to wait : soon after losing sight of the sea for a time, we suddenly saw it again, this time as the background to what I thought the prettiest valley I had ever beheld.

The road had been gradually rising for a mile or two, and I observed that we were now far above the little valley, in which were white cottages gleaming through dark green trees.

Close to the road a stream rushed down the face of a grey rock, and fell foaming into a dark pool far below ;

I just looked, and then drew back, fearing we too were going over, but the road took a sharp turn, and at a very slow walk we began descending the steep hill, the coach all the time creaking and swaying to and fro.

My heart beat quicker and quicker, as the windows of the cottages became more distinctly visible, particularly when I saw a spire; and after another turn, and a long look, knew it was a village church. How lovely it looked, peeping over the tallest of the trees, and pointing to Heaven seemed to lose itself in eternity!

We were soon on level ground, the road winding in and out amongst trees and small fields until we reached the first cottage in a street of old houses.

To my dismay I saw that it was empty, and the next also, but at last observing some children before a porch, I longed to jump out and be down upon the fresh grass beside them; we passed close by the church.

Old and grey it certainly was, with ivy clinging round its walls, and the dark cypresses almost burying the churchyard. My mother took my hand and said in a quiet but very, very sad voice—

“ Mary, I was married in that church.”

CHAPTER III.

“Each turn of the oft trodden path
Recals some early day,
And brings before the brighting eye
Some friend long passed away.”

MY mother's attention was now occupied by thoughts of the past, while I was not less busily engaged in noting the outward appearance of the old house beside the church which we were now approaching.

At first sight, I thought it was almost a ruin; there were gables and turrets rising in all directions, round which whole flocks of jackdaws hovered, and almost entirely covered with ivy, which here and there having been torn by storms from the old grey walls, now hung down in tangled masses, waving in the breeze as if to greet us. When we arrived at the old porch, I knew by a sort of instinct even before my mother spoke, that our journey was over.

The postilion got down from the great bony horse, and stood for a while stretching himself, and looking so queer that I began to laugh, and was trying to smother my merriment, when the door of the house opened, and a grey-haired man with a beaming smile absolutely lighting up his wrinkled face came forth. He received my dear mother with open arms, bidding her welcome to her home, and she, though trembling and very pale, did not give way to tears, bearing up and answering the many questions the old man asked,

he pausing every now and then on our way across the hall to look at me and call me his "little pet!" When we reached a lighter room and he saw how jaded my mother was, he made her sit down, and ran to order some refreshment.

A great wolf dog which had been lying before the fire, had now risen, and stood looking wistfully up in my mother's face; she did not see him, and just as I was going to draw her attention to him, he rubbed his nose against her hand, uttering a low whine.

My mother looked at the dog, and said in a tone of astonishment—"Dear old Mark!" Then throwing her arms round his shaggy neck, she began to cry, leaving her face resting upon his head.

Mark seemed quite happy, whining and wagging his tail all the time, until the old gentleman coming in, my mother said—

"Oh, dear uncle Burnett, to think of finding Mark here yet, it makes me almost feel a girl again."

"Oh, my dear," said Mr. Burnett, "Mark and I have kept watch here together, he is a faithful friend. But now, you must lie down and drink some of this wine, or I shall have to exercise some of my medical skill, I fear."

His cheerful tone seemed to dispel my mother's sad feelings, and yielding with a child-like obedience to his orders, she lay down, drank the wine, and let him arrange a plaid over her, Mark taking up his station by the fire again, but keeping his great eyes fixed upon my mother, while a wag of his tail, every now and then, told that he recognised her presence.

I sat down on a stool, and began to think how she used to dislike dogs, particularly the little glossy things the Court ladies delighted to carry in their arms and feed with sweetmeats, and which she used to call ugly little things, and to wonder at such a change in her feelings towards the objectionable race. Being fond of weaving romances for my own gratification, I set to work, but my attention was soon diverted to another channel, and my curiosity awakened by the earnest conversation between my mother and Mr. Burnett. They both seemed much affected, he repeating—

“God have mercy on His people;” and then, in speaking of the King, said—

“He acts not according to his own judgment, but by the evil counsel of those in favour.”

I was astonished to hear my mother speak in a familiar manner of the Queen, thinking it strange she could know all she said. At length Mr. Burnett volunteered to show her the chamber he had prepared for our use, and, taking my hand, she led me upstairs. I observed she looked eagerly round, as if remembering every turn, and, when he opened the last door of a long passage, and turned round, a flood of sunshine lighting up his venerable face, my mother fairly threw her arms round his neck, and thanked him over and over again for giving her her own old room.

“I tried to make it as much like bygone times as possible,” said he, with a smile of satisfaction, and taking her hand, led her in, when, seeing she was much affected, he tried to soothe her, saying, “Remember, God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb; every trouble

comes saddled with a blessing. 'Think how peacefully you can educate this little maiden. May Heaven grant her a happier life than the blessed martyr she so much resembles.'

Thus saying, he placed his hand upon my head, and, gazing earnestly at me, went away without looking back at my mother.

As soon as the door closed I flew to her, and getting on her lap, I laid my head in its old restingplace, amongst the soft white folds of her muslin kerchief.

"Tell me all about everything," I said; "I want to know everything from the beginning."

"Too long a story, dearest," she said; "too sad and too sorrowful; so we will talk and rest."

She began to speak of having lived here years ago, but suddenly stopping, she got up and drew back a curtain which concealed a large picture. I looked, and there I saw a face I knew well.

"How good of Uncle Burnett to think of this too," said my mother. "Do you know that face, my child? Do you remember my little picture of your grandfather?"

Little did she think how well I did, or how often I dreamt that it came and watched over me, pointing always with one arm to heaven. Little did my dear mother know the deep impression that face had made upon my heart, or think how, in after-life, it would come like a guardian angel between me and the many trials that fell to my lot.

I told her I often thought of him, and begged to know still more, of what he had done and suffered. So

we sat talking until the dim twilight stole into the room, and the picture became more and more indistinct, fading at last entirely away, but leaving the face as clear, in my mind's eye, as when the bright sun shone full upon it. I remained very quiet and thoughtful ; a veil seemed to have been lifted up. I had grown older by many years during that brief conversation. The enigma of my past life had been solved. I could understand now the cause of my mother's tears and anxiety, my father's frequent journeys, and the flight we had made.

When first told of my grandfather's fate, a glimmering of the truth came into my mind, but after events had obliterated it. Now the key had been applied, and as is often the case, my mind had been opened to reason, and indeed to comprehend the past with its bearings on the present.

Do not think I am forgetting now what I felt as a child, or making a prodigy of a simple little girl ; not so at all. Many of those who can recal their childhood, will remember well enough that in one hour or moment they have suddenly felt as it were the real truth of life—the reality of living. Few, I rejoice, have been so sadly awakened to this state, as few have been placed in such a combination of troubles as I was ; but then let them remember the time of which I speak, let them turn to any of our historians and think in what a dangerous position my poor father must have been, and they will understand how a child's life might be crowded with adventures and trials.

Things are changed now, and I trust will remain

so ; for sad indeed were the days of my girlhood. England was like a sleeping volcano, there was no very visible appearance of the smouldering fire ; yet the attentive listener could hear the suppressed mutterings of the imprisoned force, and at times the earth would tremble beneath his feet.

Not only was public spirit in such a sad wild state, party feeling was bitterer still, and alas ! that it should have been. The dreadful taint crept into one's very household ; sitting like a skeleton beside each hearth, the nearest relatives were ready to rise up, ready to cast aside all ties of nature and kindred, and deliver the brother or father to the scaffold.

The King, though nominally at the head, was in reality ruled, or rather misruled, by ambitious and intriguing courtiers. One day the Church, the next Dissenters ; one hour a good man would warm the dormant feeling of his heart, and a just law would be issued, the next a gay, jesting profligate would set law, justice, and wisdom at defiance, and the country would be paralysed by some desperate edict worthy of a Nero.

In the midst of such change and uncertainty, the good Queen alone seemed to find universal favour, and I had almost said pity, for few knew with what real affection Charles regarded his gentle, modest wife ; and those few were mostly such whose interest it was to conceal and blacken by their vile lies the true character of Catherine, and her secret influence over the weak King. Alas that that influence only lasted while her sweet voice was whispering its wise counsels in his ear, and her clear, loving eyes looking in his !

Perhaps the greatest blot among the many dark spots that sullied the time, was the open contempt in which every principle of virtue and goodness was held. In fact, to attain anything like fashionable pre-eminence, a man must acquire a reputation for profligacy that would strike horror and disgust into any heart in which even a single spark of virtue existed. Nor did men alone seek to gain great places by vile acts. As a natural consequence, women, too, aspired to fame so easily gained ; and who can wonder at the depravity of the age, when those who were placed at the King's right hand, almost before the Queen herself, were women such as the Duchess of St. Albans and Portsmouth. Language which would now raise a blush even on the cheek of a Billingsgate fishwife, was then the common medium of conversation between those who professed to the highest accomplishments of the day ; and long ere the first down of youth had faded from the fair debutante's cheek, the blush had forgotten its once hallowed throne.

Charles himself, however maligned, was not half so evil or cold-hearted as the majority of those courtiers whose vices historians have left unrecorded, not because they were less notorious, but because they were not these of royalty. It is true that the King, like all his race, loved pleasure, and often gave way to the impulse of the moment, sometimes setting aside all thoughts of right or wrong for the gratification of some passing whim. Yet all was not evil,—great and kind actions warmed him to the same disinterestedness,—he would have stripped himself of his coat to clothe a

beggar as willingly as spend large sums of public money upon some costly trinket for his favourite mistress.

In after years it became the manner of the people to hold up the character of the King to public obloquy ; nothing was too bad, no sin too heinous to pile upon his name, and to his charge was laid the levity that for many a day pervaded the morals of England. But this, like many other judgments of posterity, was utterly wrong. The age made the King, not the King the age, and if vice prevailed, which it too truly did, it is foul calumny to lay it to the King's charge.

Every country, ancient as well as modern, has its own epochs of particular sin ; England, we trust, passed hers then, but let not the more favoured and enlightened of the present day visit the sins of the country upon the nominal head. Would a lord of a county hold himself accountable for every crime committed in that county ; the same with Royalty, it is a king's duty and privilege to set forth good, but certainly he cannot be charged with the burthen of each evil of his time.

The greatest misfortune in Charles's reign was his openness to flattery ; it was by it Buckingham gained his high post in his master's favour, a post he abused in every possible way, bringing his own vices in such immediate contact with those of the King, as to confound all in an inextricable confusion, a confusion in which the name of Buckingham sinks into oblivion from the too near proximity to royalty. Buckingham, Rochester, and dozens of men of less note, filled the

King's too willing ears with the very breath of flattery, blinding him to their own faults, and baring those of others before his eyes.

The Church might have done much, but the Church was utterly lost : priests and clergymen, rectors and laymen, wrangled in the most disgraceful manner, passing their time in abusing, denouncing each other from the pulpit and the altar, to such a degree that swords were often drawn, and even used within the precincts of the house of God.

Verily religion had come to a sad pitch when quarrels arose and were settled in a place of worship. May God protect our country from a recurrence of such scenes !

CHAPTER IV.

“Sweet was the sound, when oft at evening’s close,
Up yonder hill the village murmur rose ;
There as I passed with careless steps and slow,
The mingled notes came soften’d from below.”

GOLDSMITH.

I HAVE ever looked back upon the peaceful life I led during the three years passed at the quiet old rectory, as the time of all others for which I should be most thankful, for it was there I learned those lessons which strengthened me in times of difficulty and trial.

The days may have appeared monotonous to my mother, but if they did she never willingly let me see she was weary, telling me I would often look back and long with my whole heart for the quiet *every-day-the-same* sort of life we had led at the cottage.

Oh, how little did even she think how prophetic her words were! and it was well for us both that the future was not revealed.

It would be of little use to tell how we spent our time : we read, worked, and visited the poor, Mr. Burnett going about his own business, just as if we were not there, only in the evening, when the windows were shut up, he would often bring his great books and writing into the little parlour, and sit quietly by us, sometimes reading out pieces of history which seemed to strike him. I learned to love him more and more every day, and used to sit and watch the movement of his lips as he pored over those mysterious books.

There was one great event, however, which I looked

forward to the whole year, that was a visit from my Lord Clarendon.

He came in the autumn, and remained two days, and oh ! what happy days they were, for after he had spoken to my mother in the morning, he would carry me off for a long ramble over the Downs, and tell me beautiful stories of the Kings and Queens of England, or of the Crusaders ; sometimes, too, he spoke of the present and of my absent father.

The first time he came, he told me a long story of one he called Lawrence, who had gone all the way to the top room of one of the old London houses, when it was in a sheet of flame, to save a poor widow's bird, who kept crying for it because it was the only thing left which her husband had given her. I thought much of the story, and whenever I read the name of Lawrence I remembered it again, wishing I had a brother who had been so brave and kind.

At the end of the second year, another lord came to visit us—namely, my Lord Sandwich ; but he left little joy behind him, my mother weeping whenever I asked her what news he had brought ; even Mr. Burnett spoke despondingly of the next year. But time went by, and spring gave me back my long walks and wild flowers again ; with autumn came our dear friend, but this time only for a few hours ; he looked pale and worn, and as soon as he departed, my mother lay down on the bed, telling me her head ached ; but when I crept up hours after, she was lying with her hands clasped, and praying.

Next day, letters came by a special messenger, and

seemed to revive her spirits a little, so that she gave me my lessons, and even walked out. Mr. Burnett sat much with us now, and the sadder my poor mother looked, the merrier he grew, telling me droll stories, and laughing till the tears ran down his cheeks ; indeed, one day he actually sang to me a long strange rhyme about dragons and enchantment, in such a cracked shrill voice, and with so many turns, that I sat wrapt in wonder as to how he would ever recover his own soft-toned voice again, and, I fear, much inclined to laugh, had I not remembered how often my mother taught me to respect the aged and the grey-haired.

I kept silence, quite glad when the song ended merrily in a wedding and all sorts of happiness ; still, though there was nothing but mirth in it, my mother got up and went to her own room, where I, following soon after, found her reading the Bible, with tears still dropping now and then from her dear eyes.

I wanted to speak, but could not think what to say ; at last I said—

“How funny Mr. Burnett is.”

“Is he, my dear ?” she said, shutting the precious little book and taking me on her knee.

“Why, mother, you heard him sing. Did he ever do it before ? He hardly ever used to laugh, and now he keeps continually talking and laughing. I do think he’s very funny.”

“I do not, my child,” said my mother, sighing deeply ; “he does it to cheer me ; he knows how anxious I am, and, in the kindness of his heart, he would try to rouse me and make me forget. Mary dear, I am glad you have spoken of this to me ; I can better say all I

wanted, but lacked courage to do. I may have to leave you, my darling, to join your father ; and if I do, you must stay with Mr. Burnett. Remember, dear, what a debt of love you owe him for his kindness to me. There is much danger of another war, and I know not how your father may act ; he is now, you know, in France. If we fight with France, he must either give himself up as a prisoner or join them. In either case, I must go to him. I cannot bear to be here in this dreadful quiet when your father is fighting. Oh ! Mary, do not sob and break my heart," she said, sobbing herself at the same time, "but let us kneel down, and ask the protection of our God. It is His will, my darling, and you know what He does is always for the best."

I clung to her neck, as we knelt down together, trying to check my sobs, that I might join her prayers ; but a cold, heavy hand seemed pressed upon my heart—a strange sound, like the breaking of waves, came rushing in my ears, so loud as to drown what my dear mother said ; yet I felt what she said, for every word made both heart and head throb as if they would burst. After trying to still this throbbing for some time, the pain grew worse and worse, the unseen hand heavier, until it now held my heart and pressed me to the earth. I heard a sort of wild cry, and knew it was my voice, though I never meant to utter it. That instant the pain was intense ; I felt lifted up higher and higher, until I lost all sense ; and the last I heard of my mother's prayer rang loudly in my ears—"Unite us all in Thy heavenly kingdom, for the dear Saviour's sake."

CHAPTER V.

“ Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove :
Oh, no, it is an ever fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken.”

SHAKSPEARE.

“MOTHER, mother !” were the first words I uttered, when I awoke from what seemed a long night of painful dreams, dreams in which strange faces had come to me, soothing my terrible pain, and though I called for my mother, she had never come to me. I awoke with her name upon my lips, and the image of her dear face before me. As I started up I fancied a voice said to me—“Unite us all in Thy heavenly kingdom, for the dear Saviour’s sake.”

With a sickly feeling of awe at some unknown presence, I sank back and listened to the strains of music that were stealing solemnly into the room ; it seemed a hymn, and came so quietly and so sweetly too, that I almost believed I heard music from heaven, and began to tremble with the intensity of my awe : suddenly the music ceased, and I dared to open my eyes and look round me.

Again I was puzzled ; I knew my room could not have been so changed ; in it there were only plain white curtains and one old-fashioned window. Here I saw rose hangings and gaily coloured windows,

through one of which, being partly open, I looked upon a beautiful garden. Surely I had been carried off by some of my fairy friends, and was perhaps in the Queen's Palace.

I listened eagerly for any token of a companion, and, after what appeared a very long suspense, a gentle rustling greeted my ears. I hid my face tremblingly, for I thought—they are coming ; I hear the rustling of their wings. To my surprise and great joy a voice I knew well called me, and looking up, I saw dear Mistress Catherine.

Oh ! how gladly I kissed her, and thanked her for coming, telling her how frightened I had been, and begging her to send word to my mother to come to me.

It was then I heard how things had come about, and that my mother was already with my father ; and, moreover, that during an illness with which I was seized, the very day my mother left, Mr. Burnett, in fulfilment of a promise he made to her, brought me all the way to London, to place me under Mistress Catherine's own care.

You may be sure, dear reader, the departure of my mother was sad news to me ; and it was very bitter to think it might be years ere I could see her again ; but the worst of all was, that she and my father were placed in great peril.

It was a long time before I could listen with any degree of composure to the kind words Mistress Catherine said to me, but at last my grief exhausted itself, and, wearied out, I listened perforce to the plans she had arranged for me.

One thing struck me as being somewhat strange, namely, the urgent manner in which she impressed upon me, that I was to avoid speaking to any one I might see, or who might question me about my father and mother. All this I promised to do, and she then left me, saying she would send me a companion, who although unable to speak English, would sing songs for me in her native tongue. I watched Mistress Catherine, and remembered how, when I first saw her, I had compared her to an angel. I thought too of my mother, and repeated to myself as many of her dear maxims as I could recall, praying in my heart that I might be able to go to her soon, but, alas ! in answer to all, I only seemed to hear her last words—“Unite us all in Thy heavenly kingdom, for the dear Saviour’s sake.”

* * * * *

I was still too weak to move, and when I was permitted, at my own request, to attempt it, I fell down, so I gladly let them lift me back into my weary bed again.

Day after day still found me a prisoner, and rather a lonely one too, my only visitor, besides Mistress Catherine, being an old, yellow-faced doctor, who came every day, and always said that I was not to talk too much. This was all I ever heard him order, though, as he talked very fast in another language, both to Mistress Catherine and Nina, he may have given many more concise directions. One day my friend told me he was the Queen’s doctor, and, being a countryman of her own, knew nothing of England.

Nina, by way of amusing me, used to bring great baskets of flowers to arrange into bouquets for the Court ladies, who she told me often sent to her for them ; and sometimes too Mistress Catherine let me amuse myself by decking her all over with the loveliest of the flowers. It happened one day I was engaged with this occupation, and had wreathed her beautiful hair with a garland of lilies and rose-buds ; I was in the act of fastening a bunch upon her breast, when the door flew open, and a gentleman entered.

Mistress Catherine, who was kneeling by the bed, sprang hastily to her feet, and, gazing at him, seemed to forget the flowers with which her hair and hands were full ; the intruder stopped and looked at her with a smile of admiration, nor did I wonder at this, for as she stood in a startled attitude, crowned and encircled with gay flowers, she looked very beautiful.

Presently her head drooped and a blush glowed on her cheek, while, half bending forward, she seemed to wait for him to speak, but he only held out his arms, calling her by her name, and uttering it in a tone of such pathos that I thought he was asking her pardon, nor when I looked at him did I wonder she seemed so eager to forgive or throw herself joyfully on his breast. I thought of my father and mother, and losing sight of the present in the past, I turned away, thinking Mistress Catherine might not like me to look on ; but hearing them converse in a low tone, curiosity overcame me, and I looked again ; as I did so the gentleman's eye caught mine, and laughing at the puzzled questioning gaze I put on, I heard him mention my

name, but Mistress Catherine told him I was not to speak, at which he only laughed, and asked me how I liked such a strict jailor.

Just then a bell sounded, making him utter an exclamation of anger and continue his conversation in a quicker tone ; but the bell rang again, and this time he rose, and saying—

“ I am less my own master than any of my servants ; I wish the Ministry were all with the devil !” At which Mistress Catherine pretended to look grave, and whispered something in his ear. Before leaving the room he brought her up to my bedside ; for about a minute they stood looking rather sadly in my face, and then he whispered, though loud enough for me to hear—

“ How like she is to her father !”

She looked in his face with a smile, saying—

“ Tell her so, Charles.”

And he did so, patting my head ; then taking one of the flowers I still held, he said it should be his badge that night ; but before he reached the door he threw away the flower, saying something so angrily that I could hardly believe it was the same man.

“ You are soon beginning to dispense thorns with your roses, fair lady,” he said, holding up his hand. “ Give me one of yours, Kate ; thou hast no thorns for me.”

Mistress Catherine did so, speaking at the same time in such a happy tone, that though she spoke in her own language, which I did not understand, I knew she must be telling him how beloved he was.

After he had gone away I did not disturb her hap-

piness, but let her sit quiet, with her head rested on one hand, and holding a knot of ribbon he had dropped in the other ; she sat thus a long time, so long that the sun had ceased to shine, and the golden light fled from the sky.

Alas ! with it the happy gleam faded from my dear friend's cheek, and with the dim twilight came a sad and wearied expression. Sighing deeply, she rose, saying, as she stooped to kiss me—

“ Good night, my child, the sun never shines long together.”

She then went away, leaving me full of conjectures as to why she looked so mournful, with many other whys and wonders about everything.

I went to sleep at last, and I dreamt of fairies and fairyland, that Mistress Catherine was the queen of their bright realm, and took me and my mother to live with her. Oh ! what glorious things those dreams of childhood are, all sunshine and brightness.

Alas ! far different is it with us in after life, when sleep to a troubled mind is even more painful than waking, haunted as it is by dreams of other days. How strange and sad they seem ! they are like medicine of the soul, for who could know the value of true happiness if life had no sorrow ? and sorrow must be remembered to enable us to enjoy the present. If the heart cannot raise itself above grief, and understand the necessity of such trials, it is not worthy of the happiness God sends to cure the wounds he inflicts.

* * * * *

My readers must not think that I did not weary very much to leave the chamber, pretty as it was, in

which they saw fit to confine me ; nor was I so wanting in curiosity as not to try all I could to find out why I had been brought away from the old cottage, and where I now was ; all, however, I could discover, was that I was near London, and even within the precincts of the palace.

Once or twice I ventured to ask Mistress Catherine to tell me more ; but she only called me an inquisitive little monkey, and, when I persisted in asking, said my mother had told me all she wished me to know ; so I was obliged to be patient, and treasure up my questions against the time when I should return to Mr. Burnett, that being one of the promises which were held out as a reward for my present obedience.

One day, to my great joy, she told me to prepare for a drive, and I was carried down to a fine glass and gilt coach, drawn by six horses, with richer trappings than I had ever seen. Into this Mistress Catherine also got, bringing with her two ladies, who never spoke except when she addressed them. I wondered much, remembering to have seen one of them very merry with my father, when she, with other ladies, came to visit us ; and how angry my mother had been, calling her a forward and malapert woman—even reproving my father for paying her so much attention.

This all came to my memory as we drove along, and made me look hard at her. Mistress Catherine noticing this, asked me why I stared so much, and I was very nearly repeating my thoughts, but thinking better of it, held my tongue, only saying she was a very pretty lady, at which she smiled, and said I might look at her as much as I pleased.

CHAPTER VI.

“That was the first sound in the song of love,
Scarce more than silence is, and yet a sound.
Hands of invisible spirits touch the strings
Of that mysterious instrument, the soul,
And play the prelude of our fate. We hear
The voice prophetic, and are not alone.”—LONGFELLOW.

OUR drive lasted a long while, and I was getting tired of the heat and dust, when we stopped. Mistress Catherine bade me alight, as she meant to walk under the trees. Overjoyed at the thought of treading on the fresh green turf again, I sprang eagerly out, and would have fallen from weakness, if one of the ladies had not caught me. Seeing I could not walk, they made me sit under one of the thickest trees, and the prettiest lady volunteering to stay, Mistress Catherine took the arm of the other and walked away. Presently, an old man came along the wide path, and with great joy I recognised my dear Mr. Burnett.

I was soon in his arms, crying with happiness, and asking about my mother, from whom he had heard very lately ; bidding him take me home as soon as I was able, fearing I might be a burthen on Mistress Catherine ; and telling me (which made my heart ten-fold lighter) that my father was in great expectation of getting a high command under the King of Portugal, which, being the Queen's native country, was a haven to her friends.

He finished by telling me that I ought to thank the good Queen for all she had done for me, and I promised to do so if I ever saw her, though I thought I should be very frightened in speaking to such a great personage.

Mr. Burnett laughed, saying I would gain courage when the time came ; and then he told me how he had left his old house, to live in London, and gave me a description of his present employment ; but we were soon interrupted by being informed that Mistress Catherine was waiting for us ; upon which he led me to the coach and uncovered his head, kissing her hand as he said something in a low tone, which I supposed was " Farewell."

All the way back I sat thinking of what Mr. Burnett had told me, and longed to be alone with Mistress Catherine, that I might tell her how good the Queen had been to my father. My patience was at length rewarded, and I had just concluded my story when her husband entered. She made me begin again, and go over the whole, particularly about my fear of having to speak to the Queen ; at this he laughed loudly, and looked at me so strangely, that I almost wondered whether he was in his right mind, as I could not see anything so very absurd in a little girl like me being afraid to speak to a Queen.

One day, after Mr. Burnett had paid me a long visit, I was surprised by Mr. Charles entering alone ; he had some papers in his hand, and, without taking any notice of me, sat down and looked them over with great attention, then, rumpling them up in his hand,

he turned abruptly towards me, and bade me call his wife.

Finding I did not know where to look for her, he ordered me to sing for his amusement, as his temper was slightly ruffled—(I thought more than *slightly*.) The only thing I could sing at the time was a little French song Mistress Catherine herself had taught me. At first he did not pay any attention, but after I had ceased singing, he asked me to repeat it, muttering—“Ah ! poor Catherine.”

He then leant down his head and seemed to go to sleep, so when Mistress Catherine came she looked, I thought, scarcely pleased to see him there, and went up to awake him ; he started up with an oath, but seeing who it was, laughed, and begged her pardon ; he then led her to the window, speaking in a quick, passionate tone. I saw her colour rise and fall, and once or twice heard my own name mentioned. After a time he turned to me, and asked if I should like to go to Mr. Burnett, and live with him, until my mother came, which might be very soon, as the King had now pardoned my father.

The reader may believe how my heart throbbed with delight at such joyful news ; indeed, I did not know what I was doing, until he said—

“By Gad ! the child is crying, and I meant her to laugh. How soon the contrary nature of woman comes out, though I have never seen it in you, my sweet Kate ; you are one in a thousand ;” and he put his hand fondly on her head, looking into her eyes with a gaze as tender as her own.

After staying and talking some time, he went away, leaving Mistress Catherine all smiles and happiness.

I was a little startled when she told me I must go to Mr. Burnett next day, and wondered why such a hasty arrangement had been made, but the only explanation Mistress Catherine would give me was that she was probably going on a journey.

The following morning Mr. Burnett came and took me away, to a great gloomy mansion which he inhabited, and I almost shuddered as the door rolled back with a grating sound, and disclosed a large dark hall, which, being lighted from above, looked particularly sombre. The only pleasant thing was a comely-looking dame, who came forward to bid me welcome, and whom Mr. Burnett introduced as his housekeeper, Dame Margery. She immediately took me under her care, and led me to a chamber, which she said was to be mine.

After taking some refreshment, more to satisfy her kindness than from feeling the want of it, I went out into a large garden, enclosed by immense high walls ; there I found a perfect wilderness of beautiful flowers, which, from being untrained for a long time, had grown into such tangled masses, that in some places even the walks were rendered impassable ; this, to my mind, was more lovely than all the stiff regularity of the gardens I had been accustomed to see, and I immediately began to gather a nosegay, intending to while away an hour or two in decorating my chamber. Dame Margery now joined me, bringing two or three large vases, which she said she wanted filled with

flowers for the reception chamber. So I went to work, and when they were filled followed her into a large room which did not seem in keeping with the rest of the house,—the walls were of beautifully carved oak, which was shown off to advantage by the rays of the evening sun ; the ceiling was also oak, but studded all over with coats of arms done in colours, which made it appear very gay. The furniture was of carved oak, too, with purple velvet cushions, and looked as if part of the room, it was so massive ; the windows were large and in arched recesses, and the light coming through the brilliant stained glass threw shadows of various colours in every direction,—altogether, I thought it the finest apartment I had ever seen.

I amused myself for some time in examining everything in the house ; and going back to the reception-room, I found a fire had been lighted in the large fireplace, so I seated myself by it, and gave myself up to my favourite amusement of story-telling.

In the middle of my dreams I fell asleep, but woke soon, trembling and terrified, gasping for breath, with a sensation of drowning, which was so vivid that I sprang to my feet and called for help. Even when awake and conscious I was safe, the same sensation of horror came over me twice again, then passed away, and I sat down to try and reason myself into tranquillity, purposely turning my back upon the fire that I might watch the shadows which flickered on the wall, as the flames at one moment lighted up the room, and in another left me in total darkness.

I was again in the midst of dreams, when a loud

knocking in the hall announced, I hoped, the return of Mr. Burnett, so I crouched back in my large chair that I might surprise him when he entered. The next moment all my visions of fairy knights seemed to be realized in the person of him who now entered, and I sat, almost afraid I was dreaming again, holding my breath, lest I should be discovered.

The stranger, thinking there was no one in the room, seemed at first irresolute, and even half turned to go, when a second thought appeared to strike him ; and throwing aside his hat he sat down near the fire.

I cannot attempt to describe him ; there was a light thrown on his face by the warm blaze that lent almost a glory to his handsome features ; and my reader would laugh were I to explain the effect that face had on my already excited imagination. At last, thinking I would like to speak to him, I got up ; he started, and springing to his feet bowed very low.

I, remembering the manner in which my mother used to receive her guests, returned it with a grave curtsy. I saw him smile, and blushed painfully as I thought he was laughing at me ; but, recovering myself, I took a chair, while he still remained standing before me : for some time I gazed at him in silence. I shall never forget that face ; it beamed upon me through years of trial and affliction—no cloud ever obscured that light—it shone on, ever on, steady and unwavering in life, and became perfect in eternal glory after his unfortunate end.

Most of us have some beacon which lights them through the darker hours of life, but few have one so

bright as that it pleased God to give me. He was the first to break the silence, asking pardon for his hasty intrusion, and excused himself by saying he expected to find a friend there, mentioning my mother's name.

"She is *my* mother," I exclaimed; then blushing and confused at having spoken, I shrank back, waiting for him to answer.

After some time I looked up; he was still gazing at me earnestly; and when I stammered out some question as to his acquaintance with my mother, I saw he had noticed my confusion, as he merely answered my question, and then said that if I wished he would leave me and return again; but I, thoroughly ashamed of my own timidity, managed to request him to remain, and then gradually curiosity overcame shyness, and I began to speak to him of my mother.

He drew nearer ere he answered, and leaning over me he explained that he was secretary to my Lord Clarendon, from whom he now came, that he had known my dear mother for many years, and loved her as he said all who knew her did. He had chosen the right chord to touch my heart, and I spoke to him quite openly and easily, even begging him to lay aside his cloak, which he did, thanking me for my kindness.

We spoke at last of my father and the King's affection for him, and of his inability to oppose the feeling of the people, and I now heard that a great fleet was to sail, commanded by the Duke of York, against the people of Holland. My new friend laughed much at hearing my fears, ridiculing what he called my "woman's weakness," playing with his sword knot while I

answered warmly that it was not for myself I feared, but for those brave men who went forth to shed their blood for my country's safety and honour.

The smile with which he had looked at me faded away, and in its place came a grave, stern expression, as he leant down and said—

“You must be a soldier's wife, fair lady. Heaven send some noble heart to win such a kindred spirit!”

Then he was silent, and sat looking fixedly at the fire until I asked him abruptly if he were a soldier.

“No, lady,” he exclaimed. “Would to Heaven I was!” and the fire was not brighter than the flame which flashed in his dark eyes. “No, lady, I am not, but I would give all I possess—home, everything—to, lead one charge. To die a soldier's death is worth living for, but I—I have no such prospect, my life is a peaceful one, my death will never be on a battle-field.” Then he muttered as if thinking aloud—

“Perhaps on the scaffold, and then where are my dreams of glory? no one will speak of a death on the scaffold as you, lady, spoke but now of a soldier's.”

“Except it were that of a patriot or martyr, and then,” (I forgot I was not only thinking,) “then n, battle-field can shed a greater glory or spread a fairer winding sheet, no shout of victory will raise the triumphant soul more proudly than the groan that bursts from the pitying throng, and surely no knell can be so sweet as the welcoming shout of the angels that wait to bear the patriot's or martyr's soul to Heaven. I have dreamt of such a death, and if I were a man, I

would rather die thus, than fall at the head of a conquering army."

I paused, breathless and trembling, as I thought of my grandfather, and hiding my face in my hands, tried to overcome my excitement, which had, it seems to me now, lent new force to my tongue.

When I again looked up he was standing before me, a light sparkling in his eyes, but a troubled expression on his face. He took my hand and said—

"You know not all I have felt while you spoke, dear lady; I little thought to hear such words when I saw your young face, but now they are mine, and I shall never forget them. If I die (and one cannot count long on life in these troubled times) remember you have taught me how to die."

He paused in deep emotion, and bending respectfully on one knee, kissed my hand, and then turning away he placed himself again by the fire, and sat buried in deep thought until roused by a bell ringing. He sprang up, involuntarily laying his hand upon his sword.

My fears, which in the nervous state I was in were easily aroused, proved groundless, and changed rather to intense disappointment as Mr. Burnett entered alone, and instantly told me that my dear mother had been detained for a few days. In spite of the presence of a stranger tears would come, and I was much relieved when he advised me to retire, promising to see me again in my own room, which promise after a long time he fulfilled, and diverted my thoughts to a different subject by telling me of the sad havoc the plague was making in the densely populated parts of the city, that

he feared it would not long be confined to those localities, and that everywhere he heard the same opinion uttered with lowering brows and foreboding faces.

After saying a short prayer he left me, and happily being very weary I soon fell asleep, and forgot all my troubles and anxieties that had weighed upon my heart.

CHAPTER VII.

“The Demon of the Plague hath cast
From his hot wing a deadlier blast,
* * * * *
So quick that every living thing
Of human shape, touched by his wing,
Like plants where the Simoom hath past,
At once falls black and withering.”—MOORE.

ALAS! and alas! for human hopes. “Man proposes, God disposes.” Amen. So be it, O Lord! Thy ways are not as our ways, but Thou orderest all things in wisdom and kindness.

Even yet I dare not dwell upon the next few days.

The dreadful watching, and at last the reality! What, though years and years have passed over my head, leaving it bowed down and white, long before age would have done its work; what, though other griefs have torn my heart, and almost dried up the fountain of my tears, I never forgot that first agony—the dreadful reality of feeling that I was motherless; but so it was.

The ship in which she was returning had been driven on the rocks, and all hands, save one (a poor sailor), had perished. This happened the very night I was watching so hopefully for her arrival, and a creeping sensation of horror filled my heart as I thought of my dream.

Mr. Burnett brought me the sad news, and I can still fancy I see his scared face, as he crossed my

chamber and took me in his arms without uttering a word ; but a voice of thunder seemed to tell her fate, and I heard the word "drowned" boom in my ears : nay, even though I pressed my hands over them, it still rang loudly, and I heard it shrieked on and on till I fainted.

I did not return to reason until aroused by the tears of Mistress Catherine ; and then I awoke, perfectly conscious of what had happened, and flew like a bird to her breast. After giving my tears time to lose their first strength, she spoke to me, bidding me try to be calm, and even thankful that one so unfit to buffet with the world had been taken away from its trials ; but I could not then thank God for depriving me of my mother, though in after years I looked upon it in a different light.

When she left me Mr. Burnett came, and read to me for some time, ending by telling me that my father had obtained permission to join the fleet under the Duke of York. This was a great comfort ; for though many were the chances against him, yet it was favourable, inasmuch as he was now in a position to return to England.

We were one day talking of my dear mother, when a message came that my Lord Clarendon's secretary was below.

His name brought back the fulness of my loss, yet I felt glad when Mr. Burnett told me I might see him ; so I followed, not daring to look at my black dress as I passed the long glass.

There was a strange swimming sensation in my head as I moved, and when I reached the door I paused, irresolute, almost afraid to enter, and stood holding the

latch. Hearing Mr. Lawrence say—"So very young, and yet so womanly! Poor child! I wish I could comfort her!" I entered, and he started forward, saying—

"I did not expect you to come, my dear child!"

He had called me "dear lady" before, so I now saw he had been deceived in my appearance; and, kind as his words were, it did not altogether please me to be addressed as a child.

Mr. Burnett took my hand and led me to a chair, where I sat listening to their conversation; and, somehow, the quiet tone in which Lawrence spoke allayed my agitation, and when he took leave I felt happier than if I had listened to Mr. Burnett alone.

He told me, in parting, he would be grateful if I looked upon him as a brother, and would let him visit me again whenever he could get away from his duties, to which the reader may believe I gave a willing assent.

That night the plague, which was hourly increasing, made dreadful havoc, and poor Mr. Burnett was out all the next day. I knew he was visiting the poor dying creatures, because, on returning, he went direct to his chamber, changing everything, and taking a bath before he came near me.

Day after day he went and came, and each day he gave me more fearful accounts of the sickness. The very air seemed to grow oppressive and heavy—the scourge kept creeping on into the open and healthiest parts—one by one houses were deserted, and at last the wealthy population, following the example of the Court, fled.

During this time Mr. Burnett received several letters, begging him to take me to the country; he gave them

to me, and told me I should go, but *he* could not ; when I asked why he could not go too, he said—

“My dear, I may not leave my poor dying people to perish without a minister of the Gospel.”

“Then I shall not go,” I said ; but it was with the utmost difficulty I could get him to listen to me.

He made use of every argument he could think of, pointing out all the horrors ; but this only strengthened my determination not to desert him, so I acted for the first time against his wishes. Next morning it became known that Mr. Burnett visited the plague-stricken ; so a red cross was marked upon the door and the servants, except Lisette, my new maid, left us. Even Margery went.

Mr. Burnett going out one morning, kissed me, saying, “God bless you.” The manner in which he said it, and the fear of his taking the plague when absent, made me run after him and ask him to take me with him. To my surprise, he said—

“Thank you, my dear, you may come with me if you desire it.”

I flew to my room, and putting on a dark serge cloak and petticoat, I soon overtook him. With my hand upon his arm I walked quickly through the dismal streets, and, after many turnings, came to that portion of the town where he had most visits to pay. We went from house to house administering medicine, sometimes arriving too late, and sometimes only in time to hear their dying groans.

It was a terrible day ! and as I stood looking on, trembling and horror-stricken at the poverty and misery, I learnt a lesson I have never forgotten.

After we had visited a great many, we turned to go home, he taking my hand. For some distance we walked on silently, and ere we reached home darkness had set in. As I ascended the stairs he said, looking earnestly at me—

“Mary, you never saw misery before ; do you think your own trials heavy now ?”

“Oh no, no,” I cried, bursting into a flood of tears. “I never thought of the sick and poor before ; oh ! let me always help you !”

“God bless you, my child, you shall do so ;” and he laid his hand upon my head as I involuntarily knelt down.

When I arose I saw tears were in his eyes, but I was calm, though bewildered too, for I felt I had a difficult task before me, and one of overwhelming importance. Life had suddenly become a reality, and the future seemed far too short for all that now appeared to me to be done. I lay awake long that night, turning over and over in my mind what I should do, so as to assist the poor people as much as possible. I thought of the poor troubled faces, and heard again in the silence of my own room the sobs of one poor mother who had just seen her last child die.

Starting from my bed, I fell upon my knees and prayed long and fervently for health and strength to help these poor people. Rising refreshed and tranquillised, I lay down and fell into a quiet sleep, dreaming of my mother, that she was standing by me and pointing to a bright star above, so dazzling in brightness that I could not look at it.

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Day after day I went with Mr. Burnett, and Lisette used to look at me in agony, though, poor faithful thing, she never wished to go away, but sat the long dreary day watching for my return, and ready to refresh us after our day's work was over.

Thus a fortnight passed, and during that short time I stored up so many lessons of patience, faith, and trust, that I could not but feel glad of it, although it cost me much to learn. They remained graven on my heart, and there ever after I found an antidote against every trial.

I have often told my young friends of the sad things I saw during the plague ; but, in case I shall some day write them down, I shall not dwell upon them now, except one case, which as it remained for long the brightest example I had known, I shall indulge myself in relating here.

Mr. Burnett usually avoided all the large streets, keeping along by-ways and alleys, until we reached the district near the wharf. One day, however, being later than usual, we took a short cut through what had been a fashionable square, but now, to all appearance, perfectly deserted. We were hastening along, when a cry caught our ears ; both of us paused and listened ; we heard the wail again, seemingly proceeding from one of the largest mansions. Mr. Burnett hesitated a moment, then ran up the steps, and attempted to open the door ; after one or two efforts, not being barred, it yielded, and we found ourselves at the door of a beautiful hall, but to our horror there was a dead body lying across the threshold.

Mr. Burnett stooped down. I saw him start, and lay his hand on the breast of the man, whom, by his rich dress, I at once saw was a gentleman of station.

"Alas ! too late," he cried, as he stood up, still gazing at the livid and distorted face.

Then, again, the cry came echoing through the empty rooms, with a sound so mournful and unearthly, that I shuddered, and drew near my dear friend. He saw my weakness, and said—

"Fear not, God is with you."

I felt strong enough to follow up the wide staircase with tolerable steadiness, guided by the piercing wail from above.

At the end of a passage, where an open door led to a bedchamber, there, stretched on a white coverlid, lay a gray-haired old man and woman, both dead ; and a pale-faced child lay wailing close to the cold breast of the woman. I uttered a cry, and sprang forward, but nearly stumbled over another corpse ; it was that of a young girl, who lay half concealed by the drapery of the bed.

I said a corpse, but she was not quite dead, and made a faint effort to rise, as the sound of my voice reached her.

Oh ! never, never, shall I forget the gleam of wild happiness that seemed actually to dart from her eyes, as, with one of those fearful efforts which those who know death, say so often precedes the last flicker of life, she sprang up, and, pointing to the bed, exclaimed—

"Save my child ; my husband left to-day to seek

help." Then her eyes dilated, and she stood pointing to the door. "Oh ! my God ! he is gone too."

I started, expecting to see some one, but there was only the long passage. When I turned the poor thing was lying across the bed, quite dead.

Mr. Burnett took up the child, and gave it me. I carried it into another room, where I found the remains of a fire still smouldering, and sat down to warm the poor little thing, trying to keep back my tears, which, however, came spite of all my efforts.

Mr. Burnett followed in a short time, and stood looking on. He laid his hand upon the child's head, and said—

"Poor thing, thou hadst best have gone too."

"It is going," I said, pointing to its glazed eyes and darkening lips. I wondered when I saw how relieved he seemed, and, bidding me stay there whilst he went in search of some one to bury the dead bodies, he left me alone, and thus I sat till the poor little child sobbed its soul away, and I wept over it as if it had been my own.

Mr. Burnett came at last, bringing men who put the bodies into one great coffin, and left it nailed up. He then locked the doors, taking the great key, at which I did not wonder, as the house seemed full of rich plate and pictures.

Next day Mr. Burnett was met upon the threshold by an old servant, who, weeping bitterly, said he had but just returned, having been sent by his mistress upon a distant errand, but which he found was only her kind way of keeping him out of danger.

From him Mr. Burnett heard, that when the plague broke out the young lady was very ill, being close to her confinement ; that her husband was in Ireland with his troop, and as all their servants fled there was no one left with her and her child, only a year old, but her father and mother ; her baby was born, and died the next day ; she became endowed with supernatural strength, doing everything ; at last, under pretence of sending a letter to her husband, she persuaded the old man to take this long journey.

"Your master must have come unexpectedly," said Mr. Burnett.

"Oh, God ! he gone too," exclaimed the poor man. "Oh, sir, what am I to do now ? All, all gone. You would know them, sir," he said, eagerly looking up.

"Yes, my friend, I knew your master, and trust he is in Heaven."

"Amen, amen !" sobbed the faithful servant, and so we parted.

I shall tell no more tales of the plague now, beyond what took place in our own residence, for you can hardly suppose, that three of us should escape it altogether ; strange as it may seem, and as it did seem to me, I was the one who escaped.

One morning, Mr. Burnett and Lisette were laid prostrate with what I too plainly saw was the first threatening of the plague. I cannot tell how I felt. I remember becoming very cold and sick, and for a moment the thrill of horror made me think I too was stricken, but it was only fear.

I thought that day the longest I had ever passed ;

it was growing dark when, leaving Mr. Burnett sleeping, I stole to the open window, and stood breathing the fresh air ; seeing the red reflection of the setting sun shining upon some glass, I felt an intense longing to look at the horizon, which I knew from this sign must be one sheet of crimson and gold, so I went down to the great drawing-room.

The blinds were all drawn close down, but being those called Venetian, I could see a little. I forgot sun and sky ; nay, for a time, even my distress, in contemplating a man who stood under a porch opposite, and seemed to watch our house.

What mattered it that the hat was drawn down to conceal the face, and that a dark cloak enveloped his whole figure ?

I knew who it was at the first glance, and felt a sense of protection I had once found before, wrap itself round my heart.

I was on the point of throwing open the window, when I remembered the plague, and an invisible power seemed to hold back my hand. "Why should I bring him here to die ?"

The tears ran down my cheeks as I stood terribly tempted, on the one hand my duty to him, on the other a sense of loneliness, want of comfort, and my own weak heart. I saw him take out a book, write a few words, and tear the leaf out. He then walked across the street, and the great bell rang once, nay thrice, still I stood clasping my hands and breathing quick. Again the bell rang, and somehow it had a reproachful sound, but determined not to heed it, I

stood resolute, and saw him cross the street again, to his old position, there folding his cloak round him, he lay down upon the stone step, as if resolved to await the answer to his summons.

I do not think I ever before or after shed such bitter tears, or felt so utterly weak and wretched as I did then. I could have knelt there for hours, had not a low call brought me back to a remembrance of those whom God had put under my care.

I only looked once more across the street, thinking I might never see him again, and then hurried away.

Mr. Burnett had awoke from his sleep better than he dared to expect, and when I got to his bedside, was praying earnestly. He gave a cry of joy when I entered, whispering that he feared I had been taken away.

When I told him of my distress, asking him what I should do, at first he did not understand, but when he did, he soothed me, saying I was a good girl, but that I should bid Lawrence welcome, as he had already breathed the plague.

I do not know *why I clasped* the old man's hand, and thanked him so fervently, but he seemed even in his agony to know me better than I knew myself, for he smiled faintly at me, and made an effort to lay his hand on my head.

When I had arranged him, and seen that poor Lisette was sleeping the dull heavy sleep, which was sometimes the most fatal sign, I once more flew to the window, which this time I opened, and beckoned to Lawrence. He sprang up, and the next moment his

voice sounded in my ears, but I was trembling so violently I could not understand him, and said,

“What have you come here for?”

It sounded cold and harsh, yet it was all I could say..

If I had not felt in my own heart that he had come to be with us in life and death, I would perhaps have been able to speak ; as it was the effort was almost too great.

I saw him take off his hat and stand bareheaded in the dim evening light, and say—“I came to serve you, Mary.” There was a coldness and reproach in the tone that went to my heart ; and now my only thought was to show him I was not ungrateful.

I ran down stairs and unclosed the great door ; as I did so I saw something white lying at my feet, it was the leaf which Lawrence had pushed under the door, and this he picked up as he entered, I thought looking pleased.

Without a word, I led the way to Mr. Burnett’s room, and finding him again asleep, went on and visited poor Lisette. She being in a sort of stupor, I came down to the reception-room and sat by the fire, trying to seem at ease, but miserably deceiving myself all the time. At last, totally overcome, I let my head droop upon Lawrence’s shoulder.

I do not know now, or did I even then distinctly, what he said at first—it seems rather as if he had not spoken at all. I remember only that, after I had told him as well as I could all Mr. Burnett had done in visiting the poor, he said —

"You forget what you have done yourself, Mary. Do you remember once telling me of a martyr's death? Little did I think that you should become the self-given martyr to teach me to despise death. I heard the whole story from an old man, the servant of a friend of my own. It was then the blood seemed to boil in my veins, and your voice rang in my ears. I could not rest in peace, my spirit was with you, so I came; and little do you know how anxiously I have watched the house. Now, Mary," he added, after a pause, "do you still bid me go? there is no one who will miss me even if I do die. May I stay with you? I have no sister, you have no brother. Look at me, Mary! say yes or no, I shall question no more."

I got up and took his hand, looking (as he told me afterwards) so calm and quiet, that he felt quite awed in my presence.

* * * * *

Poor Lisette died that night; but, by the mercy of God, Mr. Burnett was considerably better in the morning, and past the worst.

Lawrence now took my place as nurse, and most tenderly did he fulfil his duty, sitting up with him night and day. I cannot express the feeling of gratitude and comfort when, after falling asleep, as I often did, in Mr. Burnett's room, I looked up and saw my brother-friend beside me, sometimes watching me, sometimes reading.

As soon as Mr. Burnett was able, he wished to go out to visit the sick again; but, seeing my pale face,

he let me persuade him to give up his occupation for a while and go into the country.

His consent, however, was very reluctantly given, and not until he had tried much to prevail upon me to leave him in town. But at length his own weakness also admonished him, and one day, when after walking once or twice up and down stairs, he was obliged to sit down to recover his breath, he looked up into my face and said, shaking his head sadly, "The Lord's will be done!" Soon after this he told me, with a cheerful voice, to prepare all that was required for our journey.

CHAPTER VIII.

“Close by those meads, for ever crowned with flowers,
Where Thames with pride surveys his rising towers,
There stands a structure of majestic fame,
Which from the neighbouring Hampton takes its name.”

POPE.

WE went away the day following, and no one who has not been a prisoner amidst sickness and death, as I had been, can have any idea of the overflowing gush of gladness that seemed to carry me away as I saw the green fields and breathed the pure, fresh air again.

I laughed, and then cried, doing all manner of childish things, and even insisted on getting out to feel the soft turf under my feet. The very birds rejoiced with me, and I thought flew nearer than they had done before.

I was hurrying up the grassy hill, round which the carriage was slowly moving, when my friend joined me, and said, as he looked at my flushed face—

“Your roses are blowing already, dear sister ; surely you have some elixir. I might make my fortune at Court if you would teach me the secret.”

I laughed, but blushed too, and making an effort, I said—

“It is the elixir of happiness.”

“Ah !” he said, looking very sad, “few can make use of such a dangerous recipe.”

“Dangerous,” I exclaimed ; “why do you call happiness by such a terrible name ?”

He looked at me in a way I had never noticed in him before, with a sort of stern, penetrating glance, which chilled and oppressed me.

"Happiness is often more to be feared than misery," he said; "misery makes us try to find consolation whence alone it can come; happiness blinds us to all but our own weak hearts, and often leads us to sin and sorrow."

When we reached the carriage, and I was again in my place, I leant back, and began thinking what my friend really meant.

We now arrived at the cottage which was to be our home, and found it a small, thatched, old place, close to the Thames. I looked forward with joy to the prospect of freedom and quiet which was to follow.

Mr. Burnett used to sit all the day on the little lawn, with a book before him, but, as I found out, in reality thinking. I hinted so much to him one day, but saw he thought he studied much, and seemed amused that I should have been so deceived as to think he was dreaming.

Lawrence, or "brother Lawrence," as I liked best, even then, to call him, would take me long walks amongst shady trees, on the banks of the dancing brooks, all of them so beautiful, that I told him he must possess a magic wand to make nature look so fair; at which he laughed, saying—"There was a magic, but that I was too young to understand it yet."

He became graver, and talked of other subjects, but, oftener than all, he would make me tell him of my

mother, charming many little childish secrets from me, until I felt he knew almost as much of her as I did.

There happened to be a good supply of books in the cottage, and these served to while away much of our time, as we took them out to read in the shade. I suppose the green leaves and soft grass, the rippling stream and music of the birds lent the charm to the tales, and made me feel as if I could sit for days listening to his voice ; but I knew better afterwards.

The trees, birds, and water never brightened the same tales again.

One of our favourite books was the plays of Will Shakespeare. Lawrence read beautifully, his voice and expression changing with every feeling of the play, and carrying me so completely along with him, that I would cry or laugh, just as if I was one of the beings he read of. Sometimes he would stand up, and playfully make me a bow of thanks.

I do not know how it came about, but one day we began talking of the Bible and of eternity. He let me tell him all I thought, leading me to speak openly of things I had been concealing and dwelling upon in my heart. I had said a great deal, and, becoming excited, perhaps a good deal more than I really understood, or meant.

Lawrence sat silent for awhile, then asked me where I had got such wild notions from.

There was not much in the question, but just then it fell like a drop of cold water on my burning heart, and pained me deeply, so much so that the tears came

into my eyes before I could make an effort to stop them.

Lawrence saw them, and, taking hold of my hand, said how sorry he was to vex me ; but that he could not think all I said would ever come true, but if I could show him where the Bible said so distinctly, he would believe.

Oh ! how bitterly I felt my own weakness and want of knowledge, and would have given worlds to remember any place where it said clearly what I in my heart saw written there.

I thought of the words, "Be ready to give a reason for the faith that is in you ;" and how, by my very enthusiasm and warmth, I had weakened my own argument, by exciting Lawrence's pity ; so I sat silent and ashamed, and was very glad when Mr. Burnett's approach put an end to further discussion.

I thought for many an hour over our conversation, and read more earnestly in my Bible, in hopes of being able to prove to him the grounds I had for what I had said ; but I had no opportunity then, and when we spoke of it a long time afterwards, I had no cause to bring proofs before him ; he had more excuse to teach me.

After a fortnight had elapsed, I was awakened from my happy dreams, and recalled to the harsh reality of the world, by the arrival of a messenger, who brought a large packet, addressed to Mr. Burnett, which contained a letter for me from Mistress Catherine, written in the same loving strain as of old, ending by telling me to be ready to come to her very soon.

Having read my letter, I had time to look up to see if the rest brought equally pleasant intelligence. There was a flush on Lawrence's face, which deepened as he read on ; and at last, looking up suddenly, he caught my anxious gaze, and with a short, bitter laugh, threw me the letter. It was an angry reproof from my Lord Clarendon, telling him he was trifling with his time, and ordering him to return to his duty immediately, or it might be too late.

The letter seemed to me harsh and unkind, and I could not but wonder at Lawrence's thoughtlessness in showing it to me. My cheeks flushed as I said—

“I am very, very sorry to have let you stay.”

He stared at me vacantly, and then muttered—

“How stupid I am ! I should have explained it. This letter means more than appears in it, and yet less ; for it means, Mary, that my lord is to be sacrificed to his country, and that, deserted by his friends, trampled upon and insulted by those who dare not until now whisper a word in his hearing, he will be given over to his greatest enemies. Oh, heaven ! to think that one who has toiled for his country as he has, given up time, energy, wealth—nay, happiness—for that country's welfare, should be thus disgraced. By God ! Mary, it makes my blood run cold to think of the base ingratitude of man. I thought Charles had owed more than this to his servant. The Duke, too,—all, all, forsaking their friend in time of need.”

He ceased speaking, choked by the vehemence of his feelings, and clenching his hand, sat waiting the ap-

proach of Mr. Burnett, who had left us to read his letters.

He heard the news sadly enough, but reproved Lawrence's haste in thus judging the King and Duke ; bidding him remember how dependent the former was upon parliament, especially at this time ; and ending by counselling him to set off immediately, and stand by my lord through his troubles ; and the old man seemed much affected as he laid his hand upon the Bible, and bade Lawrence tell my lord that he would pray for him.

My dear brother took my hand, and telling me not to forget him, went away.

* * * * *

A few days afterwards, another messenger arrived, bringing, as it appeared by Mr. Burnett's sad countenance, still worse intelligence ; and when he had gone, he told me that he had heard very bad news, as an Act of Parliament had just been passed to prevent ministers like himself, who were called Dissenters, from going within five miles of the church in which they had formerly held their service.

Poor old man ! how he sighed over the folds thus left shepherdless, crying to the Lord to come and help them. Then starting up, he said—

“ We must go back to London, Mary. They cannot chase me away from the fold I have chosen there. Oh ! Clarendon ! who would have thought this of thee ?—that thy last act—for, verily, such it may be here—should spread dismay and trembling amongst the servants of thy God. Vain, indeed, is our trust in

man ! I would, Mary, that I had lost my right hand, rather than one I thought so noble had left such a blot upon his name."

In spite of his determination, I heard nothing more of our return to London ; and July came, with its bright warm days and sunny skies ; but quiet and peaceful as it was in the forests of Windsor, it was wild and stormy without.

The war with the Dutch troubled and excited the whole country, and few of the great families of the land but were thrown into anxiety as to the safety of at least one of its members.

Another source of uneasiness to Mr. Burnett, even in the retirement of our present home, was the too evident influence of the Romanists, who, favoured by the Duke of York, and, it was generally believed, by the King, were advanced to positions of the highest trust, not immediately connected with the Government.

The evils of the encroachment upon the rights of the clergy, which was called the Act of Oblivion, were brought at this time glaringly before us, by the fate of an old friend of Mr. Burnett's.

He had preached for many years in a little church near Titchfield, in Hampshire, and had been ejected, as coming under the denomination of a Nonconformist.

His congregation listened to his farewell exhortation with tears and lamentations, and, assembling at the little parsonage, besought him to appoint some place in the open air where they might still listen to his doctrine. He, being of a meek and fearful dispo-

sition, shrank at first from thus evading the commands of the King ; but, looking round upon the throng of anxious faces, he thought how they were like a flock without a shepherd, and how easy a prey they would be to the wolf who is ever near ; and he overcame his fear enough to appoint a neighbouring valley, in which he would hold his meetings.

Most of his congregation were poor people, and yet these were amongst them some who boasted of noble names and high birth, and who came veiled or masked, and though round the cottage-hearth many hazarded conjectures as to their names, no one ventured to speak openly, or stare rudely, at the strangers.

The good clergyman grew bolder as time slipped quietly away, and he had not been interrupted in his ministry, but the storm was gathering ; a band of soldiers surprised them during their service, and, rushing among them with profane shouts, ridiculed their pastor, and tore his gown from his shoulders.

At first the country folks seemed too much surprised to understand their position, but at last a young farrier, seeing one of the half-drunken soldiers clasp his sweetheart in his rude embrace, could bear it no longer, and, seizing a stone, he knocked the ruffian down, shouting to his companions to stand by him, and fight for their rights and religion.

Their spirit was roused, and, catching up whatever came in their way, they rushed upon their assailants, and finally drove them off, but not before five of them lay dead on the ground. This was a terrible offence ; the poor clergyman had to fly immediately, to escape

the consequences of the resistance, over which he had no control.

A few days after this intelligence had reached us, Mr. Burnett and I were sitting in the porch, watching the last rays of the setting sun, he expatiating on the wonderful works of God, and I trying to listen, though my thoughts wandered often to my absent friend Lawrence. Suddenly a step on the gravel startled us, and, looking up, we saw an old man in travel-stained and ragged clothes. His trembling knees gave way as he reached us, and, falling on the ground, he asked us for help in God's name. I shall never forget the mingled expression of sorrow and anger with which Mr. Burnett looked at me as he raised him in his arms.

"It is him of whom we have just heard, Mary, and the friend of my boyhood."

I was very much shocked, and gladly assisted in nursing the poor man, who, when he recovered, remained with us until we returned to London, when he departed into Wales, his native country.

CHAPTER IX.

“Oh! war! thou hast thy fierce delight,
Thy gleams of joy, intensely bright,
Such gleams as from thy polished shield,
Fly dazzling o’er a battle-field.”—SHAKESPEARE.

MR. Burnett having at length fixed the day for our departure, I left the cottage with a heavy heart, wondering if I should ever again revisit scenes of my happy rambles with Lawrence, and was only cheered by the hope of seeing him in London.

When we arrived within its precincts, we became aware that some great event had taken place.

The whole city resounded with the ringing of bells, and the noise of guns. Mr. Burnett said nothing, but took one of my hands in his, and held it very firmly; and when I asked him the cause of such rejoicing, he gave me no answer; and I, being accustomed to see him in absent fits, waited with what patience I could.

Upon entering one of the crowded thoroughfares, we met a great procession of men and women, carrying torches and banners; while they shouted and danced, yelling and fighting like so many demons.

Mr. Burnett put his head out and begged the people to make way for us, but his voice was drowned, and one drunken wretch threw a cup of liquor in his face, and uttered a horrible oath, which made the poor old man draw back in haste, and tell me not to look at

the poor creatures, who knew not what they were doing.

As the carriage began to move, a printed paper was thrust in, which Mr. Burnett picked up, and looking, saw the heading—"Victory, or the four days fight;" and heard him exclaim, "Oh, my God!" and crush the paper hastily in his hand.

"What did the man say?" I asked, very anxious to know more, and thinking something he had said, had caused Mr. Burnett's strange manner.

"Eh! girl," he said, in answer to my question, "don't ask me, it is nothing to you or me. Oh! no! to you or me," he repeated, abstractedly, as he leant back in the corner of the coach; and I, frightened that something had happened which he wished to conceal from me, sat trembling.

"Oh, thou sword of the Lord," he muttered, "how long will it be ere thou be quiet; put up thyself into thy scabbard; rest and be still." Seeing my eyes fixed upon him, expressing all the anxiety I felt, he asked me not to look at him thus, and I, feeling his rebuke, prayed fervently in my heart that the cloud might pass away, or that I too might share it.

Alas! I little knew how soon that cloud would burst in all its might over my own head.

Getting into a side street, we escaped from the crowd, and proceeded at a quicker pace; and though I still heard the yells of the people, mingled with the bells and guns, all was comparatively deserted, until we reached the Temple Bar, when coming into the Strand, we saw the whole length lighted up, as if on

fire, every window blazing with candles, and in some places rows of lamps were swung across the street, looking so bright and pretty, that I was sorry when we turned away into the dark, dismal looking squares again.

The great door was barred and bolted when we arrived at the house, and we had to ring more than once, ere we could gain admittance; we had evidently not been expected, for (and happily as it turned out) the old porter had taken the opportunity of inviting some of his messmates, and not content with a fire in the great hall, but wishing to do all honour to the occasion, had lit an immense one in the dining hall, and there, spread upon a cloth of the richest and whitest damask, stood a goodly supper, with Dame Margery herself sitting in the place of honour.

A look of dismay came over her fat red face as we entered. She stood, stroking her white apron, her face becoming redder and redder every moment, until at last she burst out into some unintelligible excuse about the occasion, and would have said more, but Mr. Burnett, who seemed almost glad at the unexpected sight, prevented her, saying,

"We shall not interrupt the party. I only ask them to adjourn to the hall and leave us a small share of the entertainment." Adding, solemnly, "My friends, temper your mirth; think of the widow and the orphan."

He laid his hand as he spoke on my head, and drew me towards him. Good Dame Margery at this came nearer, and looked close into his face, then at mine.

After a moment, she covered her face with her apron, and went away weeping.

When we were alone, Mr. Burnett poured out a cup of wine, and made me drink it ; he then took off my cloak, and drawing a great easy-chair to the fire, bade me sit down and sleep awhile. I wondered why he did all this, but mechanically obeyed, and, weary with the journey, was soon asleep.

When I awoke, Mr. Burnett was still sitting beside me, with his face buried in his hands ; and every now and then I could hear a stifled moan, as if he was in great agony, either of mind or body.

Wishing to comfort him, I begged him to tell me of his grief ; but he carefully evaded my question, pretending there was nothing the matter, and at last I went sadly to my room.

I found Margery had arranged everything in the greatest order, even opening a case which contained a picture of my father, and laying beneath it a bunch of flowers—rosemary, rue, and white lily. Their fragrance soothed me. I laid them, with the picture, beside my pillow, and so fell asleep.

In the morning, Margery told me Mr. Burnett had gone out, and requested me not to admit any one till his return ; and I thought Margery looked very sad, as she told me of the rejoicings which had been carried on in honour of a great victory ; and I felt sad too, for I began to think of my poor father, and that he might be even then fighting.

After a little, I got up and went to the drawing-room, and sat down with some embroidery work ; but

the gay colours mocked my sight, and I put it aside, and gave way to thoughts of the days that were gone—days of my early childhood, and of my dear father and mother. I was still far back amongst these treasured memories, when Mr. Burnett entered.

I wondered not a little to see him clad in a new suit of mourning, even deeper than what he usually wore. He embraced me without speaking, stroking my cheek affectionately, and then, after looking at me for some time, led me to the window, the same from which I had once before watched the setting sun, and there he pointed to the red and wild-looking clouds floating lazily along.

“It is very beautiful and terrible,” I said, hoping he would speak ; still he said nothing, and I looked at the clouds, which grew more lowering, and moved faster along. I was thinking much of my father, and in my imagination likened them to ships ; and, growing excited, exclaimed—

“Look ! look !—see, they are like ships. It is a battle. I can see the smoke rising in clouds. See, there is one broken and dismantled, like a tempest-tossed wreck.” I had grown almost fierce as I spoke, raising my voice unconsciously.

“Mary, there has been a fight at sea,” said Mr. Burnett, in a low voice. “Can you bear to hear the details now ?”

I know not why, but I began to tremble violently. The old weight came back, and I bent down my head until it rested against the window, as I said, “Please go on,” and he did so.

Thus I heard the explanation of his sadness and the story of the victory, and more—oh, God ! that it should be so—that I was one of those orphans of whom he bade the servants think, amidst their mirth.

* * * * *

Again I had lifted up my voice and wept. The dark shadow of death had passed over my dwelling, and, by God's mercy, my heart had rested upon Him through it all. My spirit had bent, but not broken ; and, even in the agony of the moment, I had felt it was another link in the chain that was binding me to heaven, and a light to guide me through the darkness of my earthly path.

I wept, but not as I had done for my mother—such tears flow but once ; nor even would I have dared, if she still lived, to shed such for my noble father, dying as he did for his King and country—sealing with his life's blood the letter he had just received, granting him pardon and the possession of all he had lost.

The shot that pierced his breast, passed through the paper, which is now an heirloom in our family, and will go to the grave with the last of our race.

Now he was dead, those who reviled him living were loud in his praise ; giving him, when too late, the justice they knew he deserved. But such, alas ! is too often the case.

It was some days before I saw any one ; for dear Mr. Burnett was of opinion that grief should be indulged in, as a time when the heart, being more open than usual to holy influence, it may perhaps take a faster and everlasting hold of heaven. So he kept me

to himself, making me speak to him much of my father; and thus I really felt the wound healing sooner than if I had been forced to smother my sorrow and mingle with the world.

When Lawrence was permitted to see me, he reminded me of the conversation we had had upon the glory of death in battle, and said I must have had some foresight of what was to happen.

• This visit of Lawrence's brought comfort, mingled with pain, bringing to my mind what a different meeting I had hoped it would be. There was something, too, in his manner that puzzled me; a constraint and despondency which cost me many a wakeful night. So changed indeed was he, that even Mr. Burnett, immersed in writing and visiting as he was, had time to notice it, and remark it to me.

I was deeply disappointed at his coldness, and could not but compare him with others, for I had many would-be friends now, who, anxious to retrieve their injustice to my father, and to please the King, who spoke openly of his glorious memory, came to pay their respects to me, with many expressions of condolence and affectionate pity.

Lawrence alone seemed to avoid me; and I would have given up all the fine sentiments I was forced to listen to, for one kind word from him; not indeed that he was unkind exactly, but there was something hid. I knew he was unhappy, and trying to keep it from me, so I was very wretched, and out of temper with everything. I soon began to suspect my new friends might have another reason for their attention to me: it was this—

The King, considering my father's gallant deeds, and how his reward had come too late, had, with the generosity he possessed at heart, granted to me, his only child, all the wealth and honours he had intended to restore to my father. So in the eyes of the world, I might, as an heiress and titled lady, seem much to be envied. Though Heaven is my witness how light all these appeared in my eyes, and, excepting only for my dear father's sake, would have been utterly worthless.

Mr. Burnett rebuked me, when, one day, I ventured to tell him how little I cared for these things, and told me, I ought to be thankful for the power I now had of helping my poor fellow-creatures, and taking me to walk on the Strand, he bade me look at the crowds of half-clad, half-starving people, who jostled the great and rich, staring round with fierce, eager eyes.

That lesson went to my heart more than a thousand words, and I came in wiser and better, to thank God for the good I had entrusted to me; yet I wanted strength, and was terribly perplexed how to set about helping the poor, knowing well that charity must be given carefully, or would do more harm than good.

The state of the Court was now the saddest topic of the day amongst Mr. Burnett's friends. (I do not mean his fine friends, but ministers and teachers.) They deplored the weakness our kind-hearted King showed, in giving way to such men as Buckingham, and listening to the advice some gave him, to divorce his gentle Queen, and marry another.

This, however, he happily refused, and his profligate Court sneered at his love for poor Queen Catherine.

Nay, my Lady Castlemaine openly insulted her, while Mistress Stewart, another of the King's gay ladies, sat down in her Majesty's presence, giving, as excuse, the state of health she was in, adding, that her Majesty might be excused from ignorance, understanding such state's requirements.

Charles resented this insult openly, by requesting Mrs. Stewart to remain in her own house until she could stand in the Queen's presence ; but he soon forgot it, and invited her back again.

Concerning my Lord Clarendon, the King gave us great uneasiness : going, as he too often did, from one extreme to the other, he suddenly turned upon my lord, whose cause having only been sustained by his favour, and that of the Duke of York, we lost all hope, and his friends began gloomily to prepare their minds for the worst.

Nor was it alone amongst private houses the consternation prevailed ; the whole town was in a ferment of uncertainty.

One day bells would ring for some rumoured victory ; another, shops were shut up whilst their masters hastened, pale and breathless, to the ports, to swallow wild tales of defeat and ruin.

CHAPTER X.

THE FIRE.

IN the midst of this general confusion and anxiety, an event occurred, which, calamitous as it seemed at first, was, perhaps, the most providential circumstance that could have happened, serving to unite, as it did, the royal brothers, both joining hand in hand to save their subjects' lives and properties; and also for a time diverted men's thoughts from rancour, suspicion, and treachery.

The event I allude to was the Great Fire of 1666.

It began, as most great things do, by a very little matter; a fire in a baker's shop near the old city bridge, then on went the thirsty and insatiable monster, pursuing the spectators from street to street.

On and on, for three days and nights, until more than half the mighty city lay a heap of smoking ruins; and it was only by the blowing up of whole streets that a barrier was opposed to the angry element. Well do I remember the joy which Mr. Burnett expressed as he told me the fire was subdued.

Truly, it had been a terrible foe, and a sight I shall never forget; yet, as I said before, though it seemed at first a scourge, it turned out in reality a true friend, cleansing the filthy haunts of our old enemy, the plague; as the whole of the quarter in which that

complaint raged, was that to which the fire showed least mercy.

Another thing, too : it gained the King a higher place in the affections of his subjects than anything else could have done ; for, being told of the outburst of the fire, he went immediately to the spot, and not content with looking on, set to work with good will to help those who were trying to check the flames.

The crowd looked on for a moment in astonishment, then raised a deafening shout of " God bless the King !" and began their work with renewed energy.

During all the time of the fire, the King toiled on with his subjects, gaining golden opinions, which the misdeeds of his after life never completely effaced.

Oh ! what terrible misery that fire caused ; whole families burnt out of house and home, and sent starving upon the selfish world. It was now I felt the truth of what Mr. Burnett had said, in there being use for wealth ; and I was soon altogether employed feeding and clothing the poor and houseless wretches who wandered about the streets in a state of starvation, hiding their scorched and half-naked bodies during the daylight, and coming out under cover of night, prowled about, haunting the church porches, filling the air with their imprecations and groans.

Thanks to the King's generosity, I had the power of helping them ; and, thanks to Heaven, I had a heart which readily responded to the summons.

Day after day, I was up at sunrise, preparing for my applicants ; and in this case I found out the truth of the proverb, that " Good news travels apace," for

each morning brought me fresh crowds begging for assistance ; and I found the poor creatures would go to any distance to find out some friend whose case was as wretched as their own, to whom they could tell where they would be relieved ; so the reader may imagine how the labours of the charitable were increased. For my own part, I have often since wondered at what I did, and thanked God for my strength. It was marvellous, the heaps of clothing Margery and I distributed, and the immense boilers of soup which were filled and emptied as regular as the day-came.

We had four men constantly at work in the kitchen, day and night ; and poor Margery grew quite thin with her hard work, as she sat up all hours of the night preparing clothing for the poor watermen, who claimed her special pity.

Mistress Catherine herself brought me bundles of linen, large quantities of which I knew came from her own wardrobe.

Lawrence often came, too ; but only ran up to say a hasty word of encouragement, and never giving me time to question him on his own health, which I feared, from his pale face, was very indifferent. I never felt tired of the eternal stitch, stitch, except after one of these hasty visits, and then often an evil spirit of impatience seemed to take possession of me, and I would even lay aside my work, and sit idly dreaming of the happy days at the cottage ; and it took some time ere this feeling faded away, and I could resume my work.

Day after day flew past ; the faster my needle went,

the faster the time went too, and Mr. Burnett told me I was laying up a store of happiness for the time to come. I did not then fully understand his meaning, though I did feel very happy as family after family were housed and clothed.

It was a dark and troubled year upon the whole, and, as I looked upon it from Christmas, seemed one long clouded day ; perhaps the darkest cloud of all was the change which had taken place in Lawrence ; every day I had felt more constraint in his presence, though I must say I was not much put to the test, seeing that he visited us so seldom.

Towards the end of the year, I had been a good deal with the Duchess of York ; yet, though often in her room for hours, I saw but little of the two Princesses (for so the King desired they should be called), they being occupied almost entirely in study or gaiety.

Of the two, I liked the Princess Mary the least. She took great pains to bring forward her own learning, and seemed amused when I could not answer some abstruse questions, patting my head as she called me a simple little goose.

What vexed me most in her conduct was the way in which she spoke of what was done at Court, retailing scandal that was too shocking to believe, and laughing heartily at jokes that made even her sister blush ; taking great care, however, to be circumspect in the presence of the Duchess.

She had two great friends, the Ladies Villiers, both of whom, I am ashamed to say, I hated cordially ; nor was there any love lost between us, as I heard one say

that I was a little puritan hypocrite, and no one would speak to me but for my fortune.

The reader may fancy this did not increase my affection.

The Princess Anne was at that time the very reverse of her sister, but, being so completely under her control, it was almost impossible to understand her true character, and also being constantly occupied in the gratification of her own tastes, I saw but little of her, and that little did not make me like her.

Towards Christmas, the Princess Mary seemed to find a pleasure in coming to see me, usually bringing one of her friends with her, which I did not at all like, as they ran about the house looking and laughing at everything, eating up Dame Margery's choicest confections, and sometimes being so rude as to play jokes upon poor Mr. Burnett; he, good, patient man, only smiled, and called them giddy children.

One night during Christmas week I happened to attend the Princess to the hall-door, and noticed that the attendant who came to escort her bore a strong resemblance to Lawrence. The thought flashed upon me quite unexpectedly, and I forgot what I was saying, and made some silly answer to the Princess, who, looking at me sharply, asked me why I stared so at her lacquey.

Blushing to the eyes, and almost crying with vexation, I said hastily—"I know better than that," and ran off to seek refuge in my own room, when, after my anger had evaporated, I began to think how foolish I had been to suppose Lawrence would disguise himself

and absolutely longed for an opportunity to apologize to the Princess for my rude behaviour. She did not, however, come again for some time, and when she did, I did not think fit to mention anything about it.

Christmas week in the seventeenth century was a truly jovial time. King Charles, ever ready to seize on any excuse for gaiety and amusement, set the example to his subjects by superintending the preparations for masques and pageants of all kinds.

Tents were erected in the Palace gardens, under which banquets were spread, while actors and singers performed for the amusement of the company. Processions of mummers paraded through the town, bearing grotesque figures of Christmas, and immense flagons of spiced ale to heighten their merriment.

The Court wits and beauties promenaded the streets in their gayest dresses, even clustering round the orange-stalls and eating roasted chestnuts at the shop doors; and not only the Court, but even the Queen went, though I believe more to please the King than herself. The streets were one continual fair; in which might be seen every one who aimed at being popular either with the King or country.

During the week, the Duchess of York came almost daily for me, and took me about in her coach, the Princesses preferring to walk with their governess and the ladies in waiting, accompanied by the Court gentlemen, and sometimes by the King himself, who set great store upon his nieces, particularly Mary, being the most beautiful.

Mr. Burnett took me out once or twice, but the

levity of the ladies shocked him, and saying he was quite out of place of such things, he gladly gave me up to the Duchess, thinking I was thus spared a portion of the scenes. One day, to my great joy, Lawrence came to take me with him, to join the Court party at some gardens a little distance from London, where they had appointed to meet, and have spiced wine and buns.

Getting into a coach, we soon left the streets, and got into the lovely snow-covered country, which glistened as if strewn with diamonds, long icicles hanging from the sheds and cottages by the wayside. We could see bright fires and fresh holly boughs surrounded by merry faces, and were offered many a cup of steaming ale and wine as we trotted slowly on.

At last we had to get out and walk, the garden not admitting the coach, and then came my greatest amusement.

The path being like glass, my high-heeled shoes slipped about in every direction, and I had to cling to Lawrence's arm for support, though, as he often slipped too, we laughed heartily together, and, as we drew near the party, were greeted with loud mirth, they having all in turn gone through the same ordeal.

One or two young men started forward to help me, but, being in too much haste, both fell, adding to the merriment by their vain endeavours to gain a footing again; at last one gave it up, and crept on his hands and knees towards me, begging in the most comic manner that I would give him my hand.

I, thinking nothing, held it out, which was greeted

with much applause. He sprang up and claimed me as his partner for the day, led me on, and presented me safely to the Duchess of York, the Queen being indisposed and unable to be present.

He who had claimed my hand was my gentleman for the day—one I had never met before, but the son of a real friend of my father's, and, as he was both witty and handsome, I felt very much pleased at being so fortunate, whilst he said he was also, so we set about enjoying ourselves, caring very little for any one else.

CHAPTER XI.

“Oh ! that I were a god, to shoot forth thunder
Upon these paltry, servile, abject drudges ;
Small things make base men proud, this villain here,
Being captain of a pinnacle, threatens more
Than Bargulus.”—SHAKESPEARE.

THE spring of 1667 had opened with a great talk of peace.

The King now beginning to see that war had really been “a mistake,” despatched my Lord Hollis and Henry Coventry as ambassadors to the Hague, with instructions to bring about a peace ; and though that happy consummation had not yet been attained, the public thinking there could be no danger, went briskly on with their trade and speculations.

Lulled by the sanguine hopes held out by the Court, the country was soon at ease, and asleep, when one day in June, a cry of consternation rang through the city.

Messengers hurried, pale and terror-stricken, from the wharfs to the public offices, spreading the astounding news that the Dutch were in the Thames.

At first the news was received with doubt and incredulity, but by degrees conviction was forced upon the people.

The news was indeed too true.

Having obtained secret intelligence of our supposed security, Admiral De Ruyter had sailed into the river, beaten Sir Edward Sprague, taken Sheerness, and

broken the chain placed as a barrier across the mouth of the Thames.

Such was the intelligence brought by the first messengers, but before orders could be issued, or any plan arranged, the Dutch had left the river, sailed round, and threatened Portsmouth, Plymouth, and Harwich ; and then, whilst the Court and people were still staring open-mouthed at each other, De Ruyter returned to the Thames, but encountering a severe check at Tilbury, again retired.

Proclamations were now sent post over the country, and in a few weeks, Parliament had assembled, but to the astonishment of lookers on, took no notice of the circumstance which had brought them together, but passed the strangely inconsistent bill for breaking up the army.

Thus 12,000 men, who had just been raised, were disbanded, and the two Houses being prorogued until winter, the representatives of England complacently returned to their country seats, leaving the complicated affairs of the country in the hands of an undecided and divided ministry. At this time, and most happily for England, came the conclusion and signing of the treaty at Breda in July, clearing away some of the threatening difficulties, and extricating King Charles from a mass of minor troubles.

This may appear a mere dry historical recital, but my fate, and that of those connected with me, is so interwoven with the public events of the time, that I could not carry on the thread of my narrative without mentioning them here.

CHAPTER XII.

"Fly, fathers, fly, for all your friends are fled,
And Warwick rages like a chafed bull.
Away! for death doth hold us in pursuit."

SHAKESPEARE.

My Lord Clarendon had taken much to coming to us of late, walking in after dark, and sitting down wearily by the hearth, sometimes scarcely saying a word the whole night. He, however, always seemed to take an interest in all I did; and once, when I had been speaking a great deal of Lawrence, he took my hand, and bade me look him in the face, and tell him if I loved "this same Lawrence."

I look up, wondering very much why he should ask me such a question, but recovering myself, I said, "Yes; I call him my brother."

He patted my head, and looking at Mr. Burnett, smilingly said, "Why does she call him brother?"

When he had heard that it was on account of his great kindness to me, he said,

"Very good, child, I am glad it should be so; but you are a tall girl to have gay young courtiers hanging about thee, and Lawrence has many a fair friend who would give him little mercy, did she know that he has such a pretty adopted sister."

I felt a stinging sensation in my heart, and looked up with burning cheeks, to ask if I did wrong in loving him.

"Not as thou doest, but stop there," said my Lord Clarendon.

"My lord," said Mr. Burnett, interrupting him, "Mary is a child."

At which my Lord Clarendon sighed and said—

"Ah, yes, I forgot, there are so few children now. I wish two, who are very dear to me, were just such children. Poor things, they have given me many a heartache already. But God knoweth best. My prayers shall ascend daily for them, nor will I forget thee, Mary. Thy mother was even more like my own child, than her they call mine."

One evening, after the door had been closed for the night, my Lord Clarendon came hastily in. Soon after his arrival, and while we were sitting quietly by the fireside, a startling summons at the door made my lord jump up, and almost at the same instant the door was flung open, and my dear Mistress Catherine entered.

She did not at first observe my lord, but threw herself on her knees before Mr. Burnett, sobbing as if her heart would break, and I saw him turn pale as he bade me leave the room.

"Oh! no, no, let her remain," said Mistress Catherine, looking round at me. "Come and kiss me, Mary—but, oh! no, go away, I cannot speak before you; go, and ask God's help for the wretched and broken-hearted."

After holding me for an instant she turned away.

I found my Lord Clarendon pacing the hall in great agitation, and he asked me hastily if the lady had said anything, and when I repeated the little that had

passed, he grew very angry, and swore more than I had ever heard him before, cursing the evil tongues of men and women, and I, rather alarmed at his unusual behaviour, sat down quietly, expecting and hoping I might be called back ; but I was disappointed in this, as a message came to my lord alone, and I, feeling that I was not required, retired to my chamber.

In the morning, Mr. Burnett rather increased than satisfied my curiosity by saying that Mistress Catherine was very unhappy about her husband, and I was feign to be content with this information.

That day saw the ruin of my Lord Clarendon accomplished. Several of his friends, in speaking to Mr. Burnett of it, blamed the King very much, but praised the Duke of York, saying he had behaved nobly, but that the King, embittered by Buckingham, who hated as much as he feared my lord, and the knowledge that the banishment of his minister would gratify both Houses of Parliament, resolved to sacrifice to the malignity of the people his most virtuous and upright counsellor.

So, to cover a multitude of sins committed without his sanction or knowledge, Clarendon was given up.

When Mr. Burnett went out that afternoon, he told me that most probably my Lord Clarendon would return with him, and that Dame Margery and I were to be prepared to entertain him as it befitted him. Lawrence came soon after, but could give me no particulars as to the decision of the House of Lords on his master's fate.

He seemed very tired, so much so, indeed, that

returning to the drawing-room after having left him a short time I found him fast asleep.

Stealing up to his side on tiptoe, I stood gazing in his face, watching the throbbing of the blue veins across his temples, and marvelling to see how fast they beat.

As I stood I caught sight of something lying at his feet, and, stooping down, I took up a little gold case, beautifully ornamented with jewels. I had never seen so pretty an ornament before, and, not thinking I was doing any harm, sat down by the fire to examine it ; as I did so I made a false step, and was near falling. The sudden jerk made the case in my hand spring open.

Inside there was a miniature of a lady, whose beautiful face was quite familiar to me. It was that of the Princess Mary. I felt cold and sick, and was completely absorbed in contemplation of the portrait, when I felt a hand upon my shoulder, and turning saw my Lord Clarendon stooping over me.

His face was dark as thunder, his white lips actually quivering.

"Madman," he muttered ; "did he give you this, Mary ?"

Frightened, I whispered—"Oh, no, it had fallen down." My lord held out his hand, as if to take it, then, with a sudden movement drew back.

"Wake him," he said, "and do not tell him I have been here." He drew his cloak round him, and stole out of the room, leaving me very much alarmed.

I saw there was something connected with the por-

trait which had made a very powerful impression on my lord, and I feared boded no good to Lawrence. I was still doubtful how to act, when my lord, having altered his mind, returned, and took the case out of my hand. He then called Lawrence by name, in a loud voice; the sleeping man sprung hastily up and apologized, saying he had been tempted by the warmth and quiet of the room to take a moment's rest.

"I do not blame thee, my poor boy," said my lord, in a kindly voice; "you have had horse's work these last few days. But look you, you have dropped some love-token; it seems a pretty toy;" and, without seeming to notice Lawrence, who thrust his hand into his breast and sprang forward, he pressed the spring of the locket.

I watched Lawrence, who shrank back, and a frightful pang crossed his face, though he did not speak, but stood with head erect, and his eyes fixed on the little glittering casket. My lord looked at him for a moment with an expression of reproach and pity, and then, to my astonishment, he cast it into the fire.

I know not how I did it—it was the impulse of my heart—but the next moment I was grasping the locket in my scorched hand, and felt that I was held back by Lawrence.

I heard my Lord Clarendon exclaim, "Good Heavens!" and felt his hand, trembling violently, try to raise my head, as he whispered, "Is she hurt, Lawrence?" but *he* did not seem capable of speaking, and only held me tighter.

"Take me away from him, Lawrence," I said, for I

feared Lord Clarendon now, I saw him so altered ; but I was judging him hastily, for he said—

“Mary, you reprove me justly. Look, my child ! I, an old, grey-headed man, beg thy forgiveness. Mary,” he said again, “speak to me, and say you are not hurt. Let me see your poor hand.”

When I held it out, I saw it was not much burnt, though the excessive pain made me feel faint and sick ; besides, I had not yet recovered the shock caused by the violent behaviour of my Lord Clarendon, and my only wish was to get away as soon as possible to my own chamber ; so I whispered to Lawrence my desire to do so, and he led me away, my lord holding the door open for us to pass out, saying as we left the room—

“Forgive me, Mary.”

Some of old Margery’s never-failing salves were brought to light and administered, amongst a host of questions and condolences ; and she, having obliged me to take a cordial to soothe my nerves, bid me try to sleep. Once left to myself, I began to think of the scene I had just witnessed, and how the impulse of passion, which had made me, without being aware of it, thrust my hand into the fire, had only shown itself in another form in the action of which my Lord Clarendon had been guilty.

My conscience reproached me for the harsh judgment I had passed upon him in my mind ; and I remembered the text I had taken for my morning portion, and knelt down to ask God to impress upon my heart the words—

“Judge not, that ye be not judged.”

Then rising, I wrapped a shawl round my arm, and intending to make my peace with Lord Clarendon, went downstairs. When I reached the room in which I expected to find him, high and, as it seemed to me, angry words caught my ears ; but not recognising the voice, and fearful of interrupting, I paused, uncertain whether to proceed or not. While I wavered, the door was thrown violently open, and some one called in a loud tone for Mr. Burnett, and I, shrinking back into a window recess, easily escaped notice.

As Mr. Burnett, coming out of his library, hurried across the hall, the man who had called him, and stood with his back to me, addressed him—

“Burnett, you only can reason with him ; he will not listen to me, or common sense.”

“James, you lie !” exclaimed a voice I knew ; and the next minute my dear Mistress Catherine’s husband, looking very much agitated, sprang forward, and pushing the other man aside, laid his hand upon Mr. Burnett’s shoulder, saying—

“Listen, old man. James would, he pretends, stem the torrent now, which he himself raised years ago, when Clarendon stood up before him and demanded justice for his daughter. It was he first whispered suspicion. Times are changed now, and truly he has said little of late ; but the storm has been gathering silently but surely. Did he try to save us years ago ? —nay, I may say months ? But now when he knows, and I believe rejoices in his heart, that I am in the hands of a merciless, wrangling mob, with neither

money, troops, nor friends to assert my words, he must needs bid me give in ; in fact, lay my head upon the block—ay, I speak in earnest—lay it where my father's was before it ; for, on my soul, his advice leads to nothing else."

As he finished speaking, he turned away and paced the room like some angry animal, his brother looking at him in silence ; Mr. Burnett, seemingly to give time for this burst of passion to subside, was silent too. Presently Mr. Charles paused, and turning to his brother, said, in a quiet, sorrowful voice—

"James, I rage like a madman ; but, by God ! I feel like a madman. I swear I would give my best friend—and you know that is saying much, for my friends are few—yet, I would give up my best friend, to bid Clarendon stay. I have better cause to love him than you think ; and, bad as I am, I have been saved many a crime and heart-sting by the man you affirm, 'I would now willingly give up.' D——n them all ! there is not one amongst them I admire or love as I do poor Clarendon," and he struck his forehead with his clenched hand as he spoke.

James seemed touched, and said, in an earnest voice—

"Charles, I have wronged you, and yet I did not mean all you say, Heaven forbid I should. I see it now, he must go, but not die."

"Die!" burst from Charles's lips. "Who dares to say that word? No, by Heaven, the man who breathes such a wish shall pay the penalty himself. Die!" repeated he ; "my brave and faithful servant ; no, by God!"

I heard a heavy groan beside me, and that instant

a figure, which had been concealed by the darkness, glided past me, and I heard Mr. Charles exclaim passionately—

“Clarendon! by all that’s infernal!” And then my lord threw himself at his feet, and I heard him call him “King,” and pray God to bless him for the comforts he had given him; saying he had served him faithfully, but must now go, and conjured his Majesty to accede to the cry of his enemies.

“Nay, even let me die,” he said; “it is no braggart boast. I already stand upon the brink of the grave, and the axe will be an easy death. You dare not save me, and now I care not, since I know you have not wronged me.”

The King covered his face with his hands, while the gray-headed minister knelt before him, and offered his life to his country.

Mr. Burnett and the Duke of York left the room, closing the door, and groping their way across the hall without speaking; and I, feeling I had learned a terrible secret, went in trembling haste to my own room, my hand and the locket entirely forgotten, as a thousand more important thoughts rushed upon me.

Yet I knew nothing certainly; it was all an entangled mystery. I felt afraid of its being true, afraid that I should lose my friend, thinking I could not feel towards the Queen as I had done to simple Mistress Catherine. Thus I remained, hoping for, and fearing, the result, almost forgetting the fate of my Lord Clarendon in the discovery which I feared would cost me a second mother.

I had very little sleep that night, and felt glad when the sun peeped in at the window, and gave me an excuse to be up and moving.

In those days a lady's toilet was a much more elaborate and tiresome undertaking than it is at present, and I fear good old Dame Margery, who, amidst her many duties, ranked tirewoman as one, found me that morning somewhat impatient. At last she permitted me to leave my room, though even then she affirmed that I was not fit to be seen; but I cared little for appearances, and, having already heard the well-known creak of Mr. Burnett's shoes, I was in great haste to get downstairs.

He received me, as was usual, with a kiss and a blessing, and as the flush of eager curiosity had banished all trace of my sleepless night, even complimented me upon my rosy cheeks, saying I grew liker my dear mother every day.

Breakfast time passed, and although a host of questions trembled upon my lips, I had not the courage to ask one, and let Mr. Burnett bid me good-bye and go away, even though in going he said he was to see my Lord Clarendon on board the ship which was to bear him to exile. I felt the tears come to my eyes, as I thought I was not to see him again; and self-reproach for what now seemed to me my great hastiness, was bitterer still; but I had little time to indulge in such thoughts, as this day being one upon which many of the old and poor came to obtain relief, I had no time to dwell upon the scenes of the night before, nor until mid-day had I even a moment to sit down.

I had scarcely composed myself to rest awhile, when, to my great delight, my Lord Clarendon entered.

“I have come to bid thee farewell, my child, and to ask you not to remember the events of last night, but rather remember me by the love I have borne you and your dear mother.”

I tried in vain to steady my voice sufficiently to tell him all I felt, but could only clasp his hand and listen to what he said.

“Thy passion took a generous form, child ; mine, God forgive me ! was the burst of disappointed pride, and the downfall of a temple which I had been building with my life. You will understand me better some day, Mary ; but remember what I say now, that I feel I have done my duty to my country.”

After this he gave me a little advice about the management of my private affairs, telling me to follow Mr. Burnett's counsel in everything, and that in after years when I wished to choose a guide (he meant a husband), I must even more than ever look to Mr. Burnett's judgment ; and then he bade me farewell.

I never saw him again.

My Lord Clarendon, greatly to my disappointment, had not mentioned Lawrence's name, and I was left in a maze of wonder as to what had transpired between them. I was hurt and annoyed at his unkindness in parting without a single word of farewell. But then a gentler spirit came into my heart, and made excuse for him, saying, he must have been much pressed for time, and perhaps had dreaded the pain he would give me by a farewell interview ; so I knelt down and bid

him farewell in prayer, keeping my burnt hand upon my breast.

That hand I now somehow looked upon as in a manner belonging to him and his memory, and I almost hoped it might bear some lasting scar to remind me of that night.

CHAPTER XIII.

“There are times when the heart will refuse
O'er joys of the present to dwell,
There are moments when memory embues
With a sadness she cannot dispel.”

NEXT day, when Queen Catherine came as usual, I could not receive her without a feeling of mingled joy and fear, and she, seeing my agitation, questioned me, and thinking I was ill, caught me in her arms, and called me by a thousand endearing names, I all the time clinging to her neck, and saying over and over again to myself that she could not be the Queen.

I had read of kings and queens, and heard them spoken of in low and measured tones, so no wonder if I doubted my senses now.

She at length prevailed upon me to unburden my feelings, and laughed very much when she heard what was troubling me, saying that she would always be Mistress Catherine to me.

After talking to me for awhile in this strain, she asked me who told me she was the Queen. Whereupon I was obliged to own how I had heard it; and she then asked me eagerly to repeat all that King Charles had said, and, not content with what I told her, she went to Mr. Burnett's own room, but he being out, she had not an opportunity then of finding out all about it, and made me again repeat all I could

remember, and told me now that I knew who she really was, I had a great secret in my possession, which I must keep very carefully.

This I promised gladly, being proud of the trust, but found another promise I made, that of thinking of her as Mistress Catherine only, much more difficult. Mr. Burnett listened very quietly to my confessions that night, and told me in turn how it fell out that the Queen first came to my father's house, clearing up the first mystery of my childhood.

It seemed that whilst there was only a rumour of the marriage between the King and herself, my father was secretary to the English ambassador at the Court of Portugal, and my mother, by her gentleness and beauty, had won the favour of the royal family, especially of the future Queen of England, who, when it was nearly certain the marriage was to take place, came constantly to converse with my mother, on the manners and usages of her future home.

This sufficiently explained the reason for the interest she had taken in my mother, and I now found out that it was to her care I owed all the comforts I had been surrounded with during my troubles, for that, during my father's exile, when the rapacious government seized all he possessed, it was her bounty that supported my mother and myself; and what struck me as being particularly kind, was that she carefully concealed her share of the matter, overcoming my mother's scruples by making her believe it was a secret pension from the King.

I loved her much better from that moment, for her

delicacy in thus relieving my mother's wants. After I had heard all this from Mr. Burnett, I meditated long, following up the past even as I do now.

Since then, my heart has learnt to doubt much, and weigh a matter carefully ere I dare place it among things that are true. It was not so then. I felt all the trust of a youthful heart, and now full to the brim of gratitude and devotion to my Queen ; nor was it less loyal to the King, who was not only my lawful Prince, but had, I found now, been my father's friend, and even risked much in pardoning him and restoring his estates ; nor, lastly, could I forget that I had seen him the loving and beloved husband of her who had been to me as a second mother ; and I prayed with tears that night—" God bless the King and Queen."

* * * *

As summer advanced, occasional news reached us from Lawrence, who even sent me some little gifts by a friend leaving the French Court for England. Yet I was disappointed to hear nothing of his return to his country ; and whenever I visited the Duchess of York, I paid great attention, in hopes of hearing what prospect there was of my seeing him again.

At last, to my intense joy, the glad news came.

One day, as I was sitting with Anne of York, the Princess Mary, who happened to be asleep on one of the couches, awoke whilst we were conversing about my Lord Clarendon, and said, with a sort of mocking laugh—

" Your Grace's little saint would have no objection to hear the news ?"

“What news?” asked the Duchess.

“That my grandfather is going to dispense with the presence of his charming secretary. Mary is one of his ardent admirers, and will have no objection to see him at her side again.”

I looked round, flushing crimson, but more with joyous surprise than ought else; though my blush seemed laid to another account, for the Princess laughed loudly, as she said—

“What a becoming blush the little lady wears! Surely, there must have been some love passages to warrant such a display.”

I now began to see what she meant, and feeling very indignant, rose and asked permission to retire to my home, at which the Duchess, who was taking no notice of what was going on, except to smile, patted me on the head, saying—

“Do not mind Mary, child; she would fain have him herself.”

The Princess started to her feet, shaking with passion, as she said—

“You lie! mother; and if I did, is it my fault that I have plebeian tastes?”

The Duchess turned away, and whispered to me to make my escape before the storm burst; and I, nothing loath, hurried away.

On reaching home, Mr. Burnett corroborated the tidings, and increased my delight by telling me that the Duke of York had obtained permission from the King to appoint Lawrence his own secretary, thus giving him a higher position than ever.

Everything around me now wore a brighter aspect. The thought of his return was always before me, and everything I did gave me greater pleasure than before, as I thought, "My dear Lawrence will see what I do."

But my greatest delight was in arranging my garden, and trimming the overgrowth of roses, which flourished everywhere in entangled masses.

At last, after a week of watching, he arrived, looking paler and older, but still the same as ever.

His duties did not occupy him very much, so that he came very often, and began teaching me to speak French ; and having brought some plays and romances in that language he soon awakened my interest, and, to my great joy and pride, in a few weeks I could make an intelligible translation of the easiest.

I, glad of any excuse to be amongst flowers and sunshine, would throw aside my books or work, and, singing as gay as the birds themselves, run off to train my unruly flowers.

When Lawrence came, and found me thus occupied, he would throw off his gay coat and set merrily about helping me, laughing when he pricked his fingers, or got caught by the sprays I was fastening up.

CHAPTER XIV

"But does she dream? Has fear again
Perplexed the workings of her brain,
Or did a voice, all music then,
Come from the grove low whispering near?"

MOORE.

My gardening was much pleasanter to me than receiving visitors, and being quite out of sight of the street or front rooms, I managed to avoid most of them.

My reader must not think I overrate it when I talk of "most," for now rarely a day passed without some fine folks coming.

Many were young men, who, as Mr. Burnett laughingly told me, thought the gilding the finest part of the picture, which expression I understood, and we had many a laugh when the porter told us, "My Lord this," or "Mr. that," had been at the door again.

One of these, however, found out my trick, and, inquiring for Mr. Burnett, gained admittance, and one day, when in the very act of nailing a long, tiresome spray of woodbine up my favourite bower, I was surprised by the cordial and triumphant greeting of the gay young cavalier, who had been my partner upon the day of the Christmas feast, and who, I found afterwards, was named Walter Fenton.

Upon this his first successful visit, he found me, as I said, very busy, but what was rather uncomfortable, perched upon the top rail of a ladder.

Disconcerted at the unwonted sight of a strange face in my private haunts, I attempted to return his salutation in a properly decorous manner—(rather a difficult proceeding, during those days of stately courtesy in the position I was in). I began descending, being careful to avoid showing my ankles, but that was quite impossible, and I caught him looking on with a queer smile.

“Are those the shoes you wore at the feast at Chelsea,” he asked, rather oddly ; then, seeing I looked surprised, he added, “Nay, don’t look angry, I think they are very pretty ; but are they really the same ?”

To this I said—“No, what could make him think so ?”

“Ah ! many things ; I’ve dreamt of them since, thinking I saw them in a great heap of lavender and rose-leaves, and in company with a host of others almost as pretty.”

I could not help laughing, and charged him with telling stories, and, taking advantage of having sisters (as I supposed he had) who would let him into the secrets of a wardrobe.

“You have guessed it ; but do pray come down ; really I cannot talk of such serious matters, and see those tantalizing little feet looking so impudently in my face. Come, let me help you.” He advanced nearer, but this was a movement I did not approve, so I gave a little spring, wishing to jump clear down.

My dress was fastened by a branch, unluckily, and if it had not been that he caught me in his arms, I must have had rather a severe fall.

Blushing and confused at my awkwardness, I drew my hands out of his, and proceeded to show him the way back to the house, but he objected to going in, saying he preferred sunlight as long as he could have it; so we sat down upon a rustic chair, and for some little time we were both silent. At length he said—

“You spoke just now of my having sisters. I have only one, but she is worth a whole family. Would you like to know her?”

“Oh! yes,” I answered; “I never had a girl as a friend. Where is she?”

“Not far off; she is at Kensington just now; will you come and see her? Let me take you there. I am sure you will be friends; I have told her of you.”

“Told her of me? why you did not know me.”

“Yes, I did, and heard of you, too, a great deal. I do not so easily forget a pretty face.”

“Or a pretty pair of shoes,” said I, laughing; for somehow I felt quite at my ease as soon as he spoke of his sister.

“Ah! too true; I have a good memory. But come, let us go to Kensington. Alice is all alone; we shall give her a joyful surprise. She cannot come to see you; she hurt her back years ago, and can scarcely move at times.”

Hearing this, I wished more than ever to see her, and, after a time, proposed to seek Mr. Burnett to escort me.

He, having put aside his work for the day, readily consented, and in a very short time we were trudging merrily in the direction of Kensington.

Mr. Fenton talked all the time of the delights of a country life, telling us how beloved his father was by his people, but that thinking he might serve his country better by being at Court, he had given up his peaceful life.

Mr. Burnett applauded him warmly, counselling his son to follow so good an example.

During my walk I found my new acquaintance was a soldier, and brimful of military ardour ; somehow this knowledge made me think of what Lawrence had said with regard to being a soldier, and mentally I compared him to this one.

When we reached Sir William Fenton's house in Kensington, I was enchanted by the beautiful garden leading to the door, and not less so by the little room into which we were ushered.

"Oh ! how pretty !" burst involuntarily from my lips, as I gazed round. Nor need my reader wonder at this.

The room was hung with pictures, and every here and there decorated with statues and rare vases ; stands of lovely flowers were clustered all about ; while several cages full of gay little birds added to the charm.

Mr. Fenton looked pleased with my admiration, and lingered a little ere he proposed to seek out his sister, whom he called the presiding genius of this Eden. Just as he was turning to go, a voice, so rich and full as to sound like music itself, said—

"I am here, dear Walter," and a little white hand put back a silk curtain that hung across a recess window.

His sister, for it was she, might indeed be the goddess of this little Paradise. I had never seen a face so beautifully perfect, or beaming with such kindness and affection ; and, without thinking I was a stranger, but acting as I often did by impulse, utterly regardless of decorum, I threw myself upon my knees beside her couch, and kissed her as if we had been friends for years.

A bright colour flushed to her face, and half returning my caress, she looked to Walter, seemingly not a little perplexed ; but noticing my distress when Mr. Burnett, who had been much scandalized by my conduct, began to make an apology for me, she put her arm round my neck, and drawing my now crimsoned face to hers, kissed me, saying—

“We are both lonely girls, we ought to love each other. I often wished to know you, and I am quite content with what I see.”

The visit was a very short one, but the beginning of a friendship which brightened and cheered many a day.

Alice—for by that sweet name was my new friend called—became every day dearer to me, and I also proportionably happier. Her illness had given her time for reflection, and enabled her to advise me in many matters, teaching me how to rule my conduct when with others, and to regulate my time and duty when alone ; giving me the advantage of her former experience, and all this in such an humble, meek way, that I began to think her almost an angel, and feel utterly unworthy of her friendship.

Many were the pleasant walks I took to Kensington, generally escorted home again by Walter—(as he had taught me to call him)—for, though much engaged on duty at Court—much more, he said, than suited him—he generally managed to spend a little time with us, listening attentively, though our conversation often took a very serious turn, and I thought would likely enough weary him.

Though Alice was unable to visit about herself, she took great interest and pleasure in all I did, remembering often better than I did the names and wants of those I told her of. Even when in great suffering, she insisted upon my telling her of those poor things I visited.

Coming in suddenly one day, I found her weeping bitterly. At first she attempted to conceal her tears, but in vain ; for, as I held her in my arms, I could feel the long shivering sobs ; and anxious to comfort her, I begged earnestly to be allowed to share her confidence.

She did not answer for a while, and then only shook her head, as she gazed in my face. The expression of hers was absolutely ghastly.

"Alice, darling," I said, "what has happened ? Tell me at once. Surely I can comfort you—at least help you to bear it."

For some time she remained silent, though she clung to me more closely. At last I felt her grasp relax, and she sank back—but whether in a faint or sleep I did not at first know—and pillowing her head upon my arm, remained watching for her to awake.

The last glimmer of day died away, the quiet twilight stole into the room, and then the moon, in all her pure loveliness, shed her silvery light in at the open window. From my post by Alice's bed I could see part of the garden, and watch the laurel leaves shining like silver in the moonbeams.

Presently, the silence which had grown almost painful was broken by a quick step, and in an instant Walter stood by me.

"Oh! Mary," he exclaimed; then seeing Alice, he started, and stooping down, gazed into her face.

I explained how it was.

"It is often thus," he whispered sadly. "Poor Alice! she suffers more than we think, and is too kind to complain!"

He stooped to press his lips upon her cheek. As his lips did so, she smiled, and murmured a name.

Walter started back, as if stung; while, even dark as it was, I saw his face flush crimson, and darting an inquiring look at me, he said—

"What did she say?"

But I had not recognised the word, and told him so. Apparently satisfied with this, he turned away, and sat down in the window; and I being directly opposite, could see the agitation he endeavoured to control.

He was usually so calm and gentle that I felt doubly distressed to witness such a display of passion, and felt that some terrible mystery was connected with Alice.

At last she moved, and fearing she might again mention the name that had affected Walter so deeply,

I tried to arouse her. At first she gazed round in confusion, but when her brother clasped her in his arms, she regained her consciousness, and asked what had happened ; and Walter begged me to go into the drawing-room, and there wait for him. I saw he wished to talk to her, and so left them.

A bright fire was almost eclipsing the light of two candles standing upon the table, upon which lay many of those little things, such as you only find in a lady's room.

I sat down and began listlessly turning over the leaves of a blotting-book of Alice's ; as I did so I saw a pencil likeness of a man, whose face, but for its expression, would have been very handsome, and yet, regular and beautiful as the features were, there was a look which made me shudder, and hastily put it back within the leaves. Presently Sir William, and then Walter and Alice, entered ; so we began talking of all sorts of things, and soon the bright blaze and gay room gave us a sort of cheerfulness, and by degrees we became very merry, Walter telling us some new gossip, and relating many droll anecdotes of those high in favour or in power. After a short silence he asked—

“ Have you heard the last news of Clarendon's *beau ideal* secretary ? by my faith, he has got himself into no small trouble. I believe he is some sort of friend of yours, Lady Mary, so you will be interested. It seems that the elder Princess of York has found out the force of her charms some time ago, and has been practising them somewhat rashly of late, but in the last venture has well nigh lost her balance, and followed

her own bait ; in plain English, she has been caught pledging her faith to this same secretary, who, it would seem, is nothing loth to mate with royalty. The King has almost gone beside himself, and swears Lawrence shall be hanged, and the lady married forthwith. The Duke of York lectured her for one hour, and cried over her for the two following. But now comes the pith of the story. A second deputation is to go to William of Orange, beseeching him to come and marry the English Crown. Truly, it is an honour to our nation to have to beg a German husband for her who may one day rule our country."

"Walter," said his father, in a reproving tone, "what do you mean ? you speak——"

"As I feel, father," and with a flushed cheek he rose, and seemed about to depart, evidently anxious to end the conversation.

Sir William kept his eyes thoughtfully fixed upon his son, but did not speak. Alice only reproving him for going so soon, but her brother did not seem to hear, or at least to attend to her, until she said—

"How is Mary to go home if you run away?"

As he heard this he turned to his father, who smiled now, as he said—

"Thou art a wild boy, Walter ; but sit down, and by and by I will reason with you."

So he sat down, and after a slight pause we began to talk as if no interruption had taken place, though I saw that if any allusion was made to the Court, Walter tacitly avoided it, appearing to wince under his father's eye.

That night, as we walked home, he scarcely spoke, except to answer me when I addressed him ; and I, after saying a great deal without any apparent effect, was piqued and grew silent too ; so we had a particularly unsociable walk, and I took much pains to call him at parting " Captain Fenton."

CHAPTER XV.

"'Twas ever thus—from childhood's hour
I've seen my fondest hopes decay ;
I never loved a tree or flower,
But it was first to fade away."—MOORE.

A GREAT change had come over my feelings since I became acquainted with Alice Fenton. Many little troubles, that I had looked upon as real miseries, faded away under the gentle influence of her patient teaching, and her experience of life banished the darker shadows of mine; proving to me that what I had imagined suffering, was in reality nothing but a little gloom in my own mind. Thus I began to be very much lighter-hearted than even before, and bore Lawrence's absent looks and forgetfulness without thinking myself so neglected as I had formerly done.

But troubles of another kind began to appear. Mr Burnett had grown low-spirited, and entertained sad forebodings as to the fate of the country under the Romanist influence that was slowly and surely stealing into the council-chamber.

I noticed that more divines and teachers came to consult him than usual, and each visit added a shade to his already gloomy looks.

At this time Lord Buckingham was in full favour; and, in spite of the openly-expressed hatred of the country, the infatuated King continued loading him with honours and wealth, following his advice in the

most important matters, vieing with him in levity and recklessness.

Strange stories of the Queen, too, now reached me ; not through Mr. Burnett, for he lately had scarcely found leisure to speak to me at all, but Margery heard the every-day reports floating about the town, and, with many lamentations, and I dare say additions, re-tailed them for my amusement during my toilet.

For a long time her Majesty had withdrawn herself studiously from much of the questionable society the King allowed to rule the gaiety of Court, and had, it was said, much displeased and offended him by doing so. Now, however, a great change took place. She joined recklessly in everything that went on, enduring the constant presence, and even friendship, of my Lady Castlemaine and Mrs. Stewart.

I felt much for her when I heard this, blaming her not a little for submitting to such degradation and slights, which, it was said, these ladies put upon her.

In after times, I was sorry for my haste in condemning her. So true is it, that our judgment ought to be matured before venturing to pass sentence.

When autumn came, the short days and cold dark nights prevented me visiting Alice quite so frequently as formerly, and even when I did, I was obliged to return in a hired coach, as the streets were so filled with young men, imitating the roystering manners of the Court gallants, that it was impossible for a modest young gentlewoman to go through them by night without meeting with insult, or even in danger of her liberty.

One night, in going from Kensington, my coach was surrounded by revellers, and if it had not been that the men-servants made free use of their cudgels, we should have been stopped. As it was, we got clear off, and I only suffered from the fright.

Sir William inquired very closely of me what description of leader this party had, and when I related how he wore a black silk mask fringed with gold lace, said, shortly, "Ah ! I thought so," and looked put-out all the time of supper. Afterwards, Alice told me it was the King, who always wore a mask in case of being known.

One day, as I sat watching anxiously for Lawrence, who had not been with me for some days, thoughts of the cottage and Windsor coming back to me, made me feel sad even to tears, and, coming softly upstairs, my expected visitor found me weeping. At first I tried to avoid telling him the cause of these, but at last he persuaded me to do so, and seemed pleased at my remembering it so well ; though a dark shade stole over his features, giving place for a time to a perplexed expression, when I said I had never felt so happy since, and would have given worlds to question him about the Princess, but he spoke so kindly as he wiped the traces of my tears away, and made me rest my head upon his shoulder, told me to think of that as my refuge, and never doubt his affection.

My heart beat fast as he spoke, preventing me answering as I would have wished. While I was puzzling what to say the door was flung hastily open, and some one looked in, but vanished so quickly, that I could not feel sure who it was.

The interruption, however, changed the current of our conversation, for Lawrence kept conjecturing who it could be, and then relapsed into a sad fit, from which nothing I could do would rouse him, for, although he answered yes and no when I spoke, and thanked me when, as a last resource, I sang a new song I had learnt, I saw his thoughts were preoccupied, and after one or two more efforts my heart began to feel chilled, and, feigning some excuse, I left the room.

After walking up and down the corridor, reasoning with myself, I returned to try to soothe Lawrence's grief, thoughts of the report again coming back, but he seemed perfectly unconscious of my entrance, and determining not to force myself upon him, I sat quietly down, ready to weep again.

After a time, Lawrence sighed deeply, muttering something to himself. I heard him breathe rather than speak a name, and with every pulse thrilling with anxiety I leant forward to hear it once again.

The moments seemed ages, and the silence grew insupportable, and I clasped my hands over my heart and waited. My fate hung upon a whisper.

Suddenly a shadow crossed my brain. I thought of the night before Clarendon went into exile, of the report, and of her who bore the same name as I did.

My hope died away.

A sudden conviction of the truth flashed upon me, but with that truth there came another, even as terrible—the knowledge of my own feelings.

I had never analyzed them before, and now they burst upon me with an agony of shame and despair.

I tried to rise, but my trembling limbs refused to

support me, and I sat immovably gazing like a condemned criminal upon my judge.

My life passed in review before me, and the veil was torn aside. I saw how I had blindly allowed this love to grow with my growth, and entwine itself with my very life, and now all was lost.

During the time that elapsed before Lawrence noticed that I was present, years seemed to have passed over my head, teaching me my own infatuation ; but with it came a strength and power over my own actions greater than I had ever felt before.

I had been a girl in thought and feeling, but this one hour's experience had made me a woman, and an actress like the rest of the world ; so much so that I could scarcely believe myself when I knew that I was talking quite gaily as Lawrence questioned me about my dull looks.

Thus I learnt to practise my first deceit, for even as I laughed I had to turn away to hide my face, and pretend I had a cold, to account for the strangeness of my voice.

Life was only now beginning with me, but I soon learned to be a greater hypocrite still, for it came into Lawrence's mind soon after this to make a confidante of me ; and it so happened that one evening, requesting me to walk in the garden, he took the opportunity to unburden his mind, and tell me his love-secret, and surprised me deeply by saying that he had the Princess's solemn promise to remain true to him.

His greatest grief now was the negotiation going on between the King and the Prince of Orange, of

whom it was said, that although he had already declined the honour, he was now likely to think better of it.

I listened to all this, walking steadily and silently by Lawrence's side, holding my head down to hide the flushing of my cheek, and the tears which, in spite of all, would rise, more, verily, I believe from pride than aught else ; but I need not have feared my emotion being seen, he, poor fellow, being in too sad a mood to think of anything but his own misery.

For the first time in my life, I was glad that our conversation was interrupted, and felt truly grateful when I found that Walter Fenton was the cause of it.

He, however, gave me little opportunity of profiting by it, as merely giving me a message from his sister, and expressing some commonplace compliment as to my appearance, he went away, leaving me puzzled at his extraordinary behaviour ; and Lawrence only partially opened my eyes, by saying in a gay tone—

“ Surely he cannot be jealous of me ? ”

A few days after this I accepted the post of Maid of Honour to the young Princesses, and, much to my grief and annoyance, was chosen as the particular friend and favourite of Mary.

For a short time, my new mode of life appeared more like a dream than reality.

I disliked the restraint and formality we were obliged to adhere to in public, but still more so the levity and idleness of our private life.

Day after day, I longed more and more to be in my lonely garden, where, even if it was a little dull, the

dulness was amply compensated by the freedom I enjoyed.

Alice left London the same week that I undertook my new duties, and I was thus deprived of her counsel and sympathy when I felt I most needed it, and if it had not been for the frequent opportunities I enjoyed of seeing and speaking to my kind friend the Queen, I do not think even the fear I had of displeasing the King would have induced me to conform to the weary life I led.

The Princess Mary, as I said, at once made a favourite of me, and, as a natural consequence, her late adviser and favourite became my inveterate enemy.

This, however, gave me but little uneasiness, as I disliked her heartily, and was very glad when, in a fit of spleen, she retired to the country for some time.

Of course I heard a great deal of what was going on in the world, but only through the same false colouring through which everything was represented at Court, and one day I well nigh got myself into disgrace by speaking my mind too openly on this very subject.

The King, accompanied by my Lord Buckingham and another, whose name I forget, came to sit with the Princesses.

The conversation gradually took a grave turn, and Buckingham began to flatter the King, by telling him there was not a man in Great Britain but would defend him to the last drop of his blood, and that he (Buckingham) had but to give the word, and the whole populace would obey his summons.

I felt the blood rise to my cheeks at this barefaced lie, for it was well known that the country was in a ferment of excitement, and that it needed the utmost efforts of the faithful ministers to keep up even a semblance of content, and that Buckingham himself was so detested that he lived in hourly danger of assassination.

He was still speaking, when, unable to conceal my feelings, and forgetful of all else but anger at the deception practised upon the King, I exclaimed—

“’Tis false, Lord Buckingham, and you know it is.”

Had a thunderbolt struck him he could not have looked more surprised ; the colour left his face, and laying his hand on his sword, he sprung up ; then, with a forced laugh, he fell back again, swearing he wished I had been a man.

“If I called myself a man, I should not act the part of a knave, my lord. Whose fault is it that the King’s name is becoming a by-word amongst the most degraded of his subjects ?—whose influence is sapping away the love of all good and true men ?—whose machinations are sowing discord in the kingdom ; and while he flatters with his tongue grasps a dagger in his hand ?”

“Hold, Mary,” said King Charles, laying his hand upon my shoulder ; “hold, girl, I command thee. Be silent, my lord,” he added, seeing Buckingham about to speak, “I will inquire into this ; *she* has nothing to gain by a lie, so she may speak the truth.”

“Ay, and looks devilish handsome when she——”

“Silence, and leave the room !” exclaimed the King, passionately interrupting his free and easy

favourite, who, with a smile upon his lip (which I could see, nevertheless, grew pale and quivered), made a low bow, and lounged quietly out of the apartment.

The King paced up and down for some time, then arresting his steps in front of me, he said, surveying me from head to foot with a half smile—

“By Jove! I wish some of my courtiers had such stuff under their jackets as thou hast under that silken bodice of thine. But, seriously, what meant this outburst; do you think you can afford to make Buckingham your enemy?”

“Your Majesty! I can speak the truth without fear of any one. I could not sit still and listen to his perjured lips. If I have done wrong I am very sorry. I would die to serve your Majesty, but not one in a hundred of your subjects would.”

The King started, and said—

“Why, what has put this in your head, girl? England was never more loyal than it is at present. Who has been filling that pretty head of yours with such ideas?”

“No one, your Majesty,” I answered; “I have seen and judged for myself. Oh! your Majesty! go amongst them yourself; go with good men; listen to them, and be what we all love and honour; be yourself, and the kingdom will flock to your side.”

My excitement here got the better of me, and I burst into tears. King Charles was silent for a while, and then laid his hand upon my bent head, and whispered—

“I thank you, Mary; I will tell Catherine what thou sayest.”

When he was gone, I too rose to go, only anxious to hide myself after this display, and more so, as the ladies burst into peals of laughter, and called me a little tigress; so I escaped, and in the seclusion of my own chamber thought over the events of the last hour, coming to the conclusion that I was a great fool for my pains, as I had done no good, only making a powerful enemy for myself.

Willing to forget it, and find some consolation, I went to visit Mr. Burnett, and having unburthened my breast to him, was much pleased to receive his commendation and praise at my courage in thus speaking my mind, though he bid me be careful of the Lord Buckingham, whom I had offended past forgiveness.

Nothing, however, came of it for the present, the King seeming to forget it, the favourite telling the story as a great jest, and taking every opportunity to be seen with me. It was in vain I refused to speak or listen to his disgusting flattery and praise. I told him I detested him, but he only laughed, and said—

“I was worth all the beauties in London, and a better actress than the stage boasted.”

CHAPTER XVI.

“ I have never loved thee,
I cannot love thee ! This is not my fault ;
It is my destiny. Thou art a man
Restless and violent. What wouldst thou with me,
A feeble girl ? ”—LONGFELLOW.

My greatest vexation about this adventure was from the raillery of the Princesses, who took delight in bringing him into my presence, and whenever I refused to join their wild pranks would threaten me with sending for this man. Lawrence heard the joke from some one, and took part against me, hurting my feelings thereby more deeply than I was willing to acknowledge even to myself, and at last tried to avoid him too, but that was a difficult matter, as he had taken to coming to me so much of late, and used to join in all the fun the ladies got up to pass their leisure hours.

His visit being to me was only a pretence, as I speedily discovered what brought him there, and felt very angry to notice how the Princess Mary took opportunity to be alone with him, sending Anne away, who, seeing through her design, and having her own ends in view, easily lent herself to the deceit.

Of me she was utterly regardless, and would beckon him to come to her in one of the windows, where they stood talking in whispers until upon some one approaching the chamber, I would be drawn into the conversation.

One day, being deeply engrossed with each other, they did not hear the entrance of the King, who, seeing at a glance who occupied the window, came softly up to me, bidding me be silent.

I sat with my back to the Princess and Lawrence, but he could see them, and I saw him grow deadly pale, and clench his hand passionately, as he muttered—

“Damnation ! he will kiss her next.”

This climax, if it did arrive, he did not wait to see, as starting up he left the room, leaving me a heavy weight at my heart, and the fear of Lawrence’s safety adding to my other cares.

Three days elapsed without my again seeing Lawrence, and all that time my heart was torn by private apprehensions for his safety ; then I ventured to ask the King what had become of him, and heard how he had punished his presumption, namely, by making him bearer of private letters, requesting the presence of William of Orange.

Our mornings were much saddened by Lawrence’s absence, and as the year closed I felt almost glad it was over, hailing the beginning of another with a hopeful heart.

Christmas was kept with great rejoicings, which were led by the King and Duke, who took a prominent part in all that went on, thinking to gain the affection and confidence of the mob, who were soon ready to swear by such a merry monarch, particularly as some sharp-eyed courtiers, seeing signs of a decline in Buckingham’s favour, took pains to make it surer by spreading reports that the King was tired of his vices.

The Duke gave out publicly that he intended to marry again, and secure a Protestant prince to the throne. The marriage between the Princess Mary and William was decided, and hailed with loud acclamations, his name being already familiar from his gallant conduct during the wars in Holland.

This Christmas was of great import, but even more so to me, on account of an adventure which befell me. It happened as I was returning from rather a late visit to Mr. Burnett; the coach was surrounded by a mob of maskers; I grew frightened, and thinking I would escape unnoticed through the crowd, I getting out, had succeeded in reaching the gate to the Park, when I was accosted by a man wearing a red mask.

Ere I could answer he threw his arm round my waist, and put something over my mouth, which almost choked me, and, holding down my head, he carried me along at a rapid pace to where a coach was waiting, and we were driven off at a great pace.

Perfectly helpless, and nearly fainting from the pain caused by the bandage, I leant back, and mentally resigned myself to whatever was my fate, feeling I was equal to hold my own against most people.

After a drive of an hour or two we stopped, and in the dim light I saw we had reached a stately castle, and as we waited for the lowering of the bridge, I noticed that the man who had accompanied me gave all the directions, and was obeyed with much respect by the attendants; but a bandage was drawn over my eyes, and was only removed when we got into a room, where the dazzling light almost blinded me; and I

buried my face in the pillows of a couch, fearful of seeing anything.

Finding no one addressed me, I looked up, and found I was alone in a large and beautifully furnished room, lighted by rose-coloured lamps, and filled with the fumes of a censer of burning essence, which, in spite of my fear, exercised such a soothing influence over my excited feelings that I fell asleep.

I was awakened by an ugly old woman, who shook me until I came to my senses, and then, pointing to a table laid with refreshments, she left me, locking the door behind her.

It was evident I was a prisoner, but where or for what purpose was a complete mystery. At first it gave me great uneasiness, but then I began to think I had been carried off by mistake, and when this was discovered I would be sent home again; so I waited the arrival of my gaoler with great impatience.

The day passed wearily away, nor did even a sound greet my anxious ear; and the evening tints were stealing into the room before the attendant returned, and then I found she was deaf and dumb; so of course unable to satisfy my curiosity.

In leaving, she gave me a note, in which I was addressed by name, and told that, not having succeeded in gaining my favour, the writer had adopted the present mode of securing me until I consented to become his wife.

Here was a climax to all my troubles; my last hope was banished, and utterly at a loss and miserable, I leant my head upon the table and began to cry.

As my tears ceased, a feeling of strength and comfort stole into my heart, and mingled with indignation at the insult came a sense of my own power.

It was well this change came, for ere long the entrance of Buckingham himself set all my doubts at rest, and alarmed, though it nerved me for the worst. When he entered I gave way to my feelings by a burst of reproach. He did not take the least notice of this, except by saying he was quite prepared for all I had said, but was determined to marry me with or without my own free will.

Giving me no time for reply, he began a ludicrous account of his adventures in trying to secure me, having three times waylaid and captured wrong people, and once received a wound from those who accompanied one of the ladies.

Whilst he was speaking, my plans were arranged, and seeing my only hope of escape lay in pretended obedience, I acted my part so well, that Buckingham did not care to hide his exultation, and laughingly anticipated his triumph when he took me to Court as his wife.

He was still with me when the old hag I have mentioned entered, followed by a man, who whispered a few words to Buckingham, of which I only heard the words—"Majesty," and "instantly."

While he addressed my lord, he kept eyeing me with apparent curiosity, and very handsome eyes they were too, with a gentle and serious expression, much at variance with the words I shortly heard fall from his lips, as, taking his friend's arm, he hurried him away.

As they went out of the room, the stranger looked back, and beckoned me to follow.

There was something in his face made me trust him, and I obeyed. He remained to close and lock the door, but while pretending to arrange the lock, adroitly slipped the key inside.

The reader may believe how eagerly I seized it, and how intently I listened ; my lord calling him from the staircase, bid him be quick with the "cursed lock." Then all was silent. Feeling I had liberty in my own hand, I locked the door, and lay down to arrange my plans.

After a time the old woman came, bringing me wine and fruit. When she was gone, now seemed my moment of escape.

Wrapping a cloak round me, I opened the door, and followed the glimmering light of the lamp carried by the old woman through several rooms and along a gallery, this last communicating with a dining-room, from which proceeded great mirth and laughing. Disconcerted by this, I took refuge in the recess of a window, which, being open from the heat of the weather, gave me a starlit view of the moat and park.

I was almost forgetting where I was, when a door opening, I heard voices close beside me ; then followed a song ; and after that another and another, all sung by one whose voice, I thought, I recognised as that of the cavalier who had liberated me.

When, from the faintness of the sound, I judged that the door had been closed, I ventured cautiously out of my concealment, but had barely reached the

centre of the wide hall, when a door directly before me was thrown open, and a group of men (those I had heard singing) appeared. For a moment, I stood paralyzed: then with a faint hope that they had not recognised me, turned, and fled hastily along the dimly-lighted gallery.

My hope was vain, for, as I turned, a voice, whose tone was perfectly familiar, shouted, with a loud laugh, a hunting call. I heard Buckingham swear a loud oath, and seemed to attempt to prevent the rest following, but in vain, and the next minute they were all in pursuit.

I was now in a terrible fright; they were evidently half, if not altogether, intoxicated, and I knew I must expect to meet with insult if I was caught.

What had lately been my prison appeared now a haven of refuge, and the hope of reaching it in time lent wings to my feet. Alas! I had taken no heed of the way, and, missing the turning, I found myself back in the hall, and face to face with some of the party who had been too drunk to accompany their companions.

I was desperate, my pursuers were close behind, and the others waiting triumphantly for me. I remembered the open window, and heedless of consequences, I sprang from it.

As I did so, I felt how mad I was, but too late; down and down I went, until I seemed to lose all sensation, and was only recalled by coming in contact with deep and cold water. •

I heard a cry of dismay, and as I lay breathless upon

the surface, supported by the hoops and light clothing I wore, lights hurried from window to window, and were flashed down upon the dark moat ; but I saw no more ; the shock was too much for me—I fainted. When I recovered I was being carried up a long staircase. A warm cheek was laid to mine, and a voice whispered—

“ You are safe, do not betray me.”

I knew at once it was he who had been the means of my escape, and with a reliance upon his honesty, I clung trustingly to him, hiding my face upon his breast as he brought me into the brightly lighted room.

“ By Gad ! thou art an active fellow ; thou art first again.”

And the man who spoke clapped my preserver upon the shoulder.

“ He knew the way best,” shouted two or three others, rushing into the room.

“ Carry her up again,” whispered Buckingham, “ and for your life do not let her face be seen.”

No sooner did these words reach me than I looked round, and, disengaging myself from his arms, confronted my lord.

As I did so an exclamation broke from some one near me, and turning, to my intense delight, I saw Walter Fenton. He was instantly at my side, and, with my hand clasped in his, I felt I could brave anything.

The room was half full of courtiers, and in the midst stood the King himself. He was talking with a laughing face to Buckingham when he heard my name, and,

turning sharply round, uttered an exclamation of angry surprise.

Walter Fenton, still holding my hand, demanded satisfaction from the villain who had insulted me.

But the King was no longer the laughing reveller of a few minutes before. Waving his hand, he said—

“Be patient, sir, this is an insult to me ; the lady is my ward. His Grace of Buckingham presumes even beyond himself.” Then he added, turning to Buckingham—

“This is too much, my lord ; impertinence may go too far, even in a favourite. Ask this lady’s pardon instantly, and do you, Fenton, see that a coach is prepared. We ourself will escort her to her home. Truly our mirth has ended in what my graver brethren term heaviness.”

A smile passed round the group, but Buckingham looked deeply incensed, and attempted to speak more than once ; each time, however, he was silenced by the King, and then appearing to think better of things, he made a courteous apology to me, gained the King’s private ear for ten minutes, during which time he effectually made peace, as his Majesty laughed merrily, and ended by tapping him playfully on the shoulder, as he bade him try fair means in his amour.

He then placed my hand in his arm, and proceeded to the coach. I could see my lord’s diabolical sneer as he did so, and the vision haunted me for months afterwards.

CHAPTER XVII.

“A man so various that he seemed to be
No one but all mankind’s epitome,
And in the changes of a single moon
A fiddler, statesman, lover, and buffoon.”

DRYDEN.

OF course my adventure became known, and created a great sensation, in which many rather envied than pitied me, and, indeed, several told me plainly they would have given their ears to be in my place ; but nothing lasted long in our versatile Court. The precariousness of Buckingham’s influence began to engross their attention, and I was soon forgotten.

I lay long ill from a fever brought on by my midnight bath, and I was scarcely well again when the Court was thrown into a perfect ferment of excitement by the announcement of a visit from the Prince of Orange, and though the true reason was kept secret, it was well understood for what purpose he came.

So every eye and thought was now turned upon the Princess Mary, and every tongue busy criticising her words and demeanour.

I saw her distress and perplexity, and could not but feel sorry when I thought of her certain fate, and the agony she must be a prey to.

The arrival of the Prince caused great festivities, which were increased when it was known they gave him pleasure, and though those who knew him better

affirmed that had our King been the guest, the Prince would rather have cut off his right hand than expend so much good money upon shows and feasting. Be this as it might, he could, and did, enter fully into the mirth, fun, and good living that went on, and fed and amused himself heartily at our expense.

At the beginning he was a little shy with the Princess Mary, but it soon became evident that her fresh beauty and gay English manners had won his heart, and he threw aside all constraint, devoting himself assiduously to her, and making it his business to win her regard and love before he made his final offer.

The King looked on with a strong interest, and even grew tender-hearted towards Lawrence from pity, I suppose, as he saw the Princess admit the attentions of his great rival so readily.

At first the Princess received these marks of admiration as her due, and exerted all her powers to flatter and win the Prince's regard; but when there could be no doubt, and King Charles himself began to give her his advice, she, when she found he was really at her feet, would fain have undone her work; but too late, the Prince had her royal uncle's consent. The kingdom demanded her marriage, and, perhaps, too, a secret voice spoke of regal dignities which, had she permitted love to guide her choice, would never have been hers. Her tears, it is certain, flowed in private, and many a sad thought darkened the light of her beautiful eyes; but all these things passed away, and she seemed to forget every former feeling in the preparation made for her departure from England.

Upon the night before her wedding, she made fatigue an excuse for retiring somewhat earlier to her own apartments, and I being alone with her, was the only witness to the last outbreak of affection I believe she ever showed. After I had closed the door of the entrance-chamber, she remained for a long time much cast down, then taking my hand, looked earnestly in my face, saying—

“ I believe you are my friend, Mary, and at least I know you love Lawrence, so for his sake will be so.”

Had a serpent stung me, I could not have felt more deeply ; all my worst nature was roused, and I could have struck her as she sat gazing up at me with her beautiful and heartless face, where even through grief I could see a sort of triumph.

Shuddering at the violence of my own feelings, I turned away, forgetting all except that we were both women, and loved the same object ; but widely different was our lot. She had even in her misery the knowledge that every pang she suffered vibrated two-fold stronger in his breast, whilst I had no comfort ; all was darkness, and the world a hopeless, loveless burthen.

“ You ask too much. How can I bring him here to be tormented ?” As I said this my lips grew pale, and I well nigh gave way to my passion and left her.

Her answer somewhat recalled me—

“ Mary, you forget yourself. I ask you to be my friend, and you insult me. Is my love likely to bring me happiness ? Think you that it is a pleasant prospect to give myself within a few short hours to that

cold-hearted, grasping Dutchman, and leave my home, my country—all, all—to satisfy my uncle? Is that a pleasant prospect, I ask? And yet, knowing all this, you would deny me the last gleam of sunshine that can shine upon me. He has loved you like a brother: surely you are grateful, and for him will do this.”

So I listened, and having had her directions, dressed myself and departed on my errand.

I found Lawrence waiting, well nigh beside himself with anxiety. My heart softened as I gazed at his miserable expression. I felt even more than wretched, and would have given worlds to comfort him, but the words died on my lips. I could only beckon him to follow me, and he, seeing my agitation, thought I was angry with him, and seizing my hand, besought me to have pity—to feel for him—and not deprive him of the only brightness life contained—my own affection.

His words burnt their way into my inmost soul—my whole frame trembled with emotion, and, perfectly unable to bear it any longer, I tore my hand from his, and without daring to look at him, ran on before.

The cold night wind seemed to add fuel to the fire already burning my heart. I do not yet know what I did, or how I reached the palace, but I brought Lawrence to the Princess, and when he hesitated at the door of her chamber, and, pressing his hand upon his heart, stood irresolute, I laughed, and “bade him be a man.”

A flush rose to his pale face, and his eyes met mine for a moment with a surprised gaze; but he only said—

“Mary—my sister.”

His words rang in my ears for many a day ; they were the only ones approaching a reproof I had ever heard him utter, and impressed me proportionably.

Of the parting scene with the Princess I shall say little. I remained, it is true, in the ante-chamber, and might have seen and heard all that passed, but wild noises rang in my ears, strange lights kept dancing before me, while my heart beat faster and faster every minute, and I sat with my head buried in my hands until Lawrence called me. I found the Princess lying upon a couch, sobbing bitterly ; her love and grief had brought on a fit of hysterics, and he, in an agony of fear, knew not what to do. While I was attempting to calm her, the noise of approaching footsteps sounded in the long gallery, and Lawrence had barely time to leave the room, when the Princess Anne and one of her ladies in waiting entered.

She expressed her surprise at finding her sister in tears, and, as if suspecting the cause, looked sharply about ; and I was relieved at the arrival of Queen Catherine and a whole bevy of Court ladies, coming to put the bride elect to bed, according to an old-fashioned custom ; and though at first Mary took little pleasure in what was going on, she soon managed to enter into all their mirth, and laugh at the not very delicate jokes they made upon one another.

Her marriage took place next night in that very room, and without a trace of emotion she swore to love the Prince.

That night a line from Lawrence made me aware of

his having permission to join the fleet, and that he bid me farewell, perhaps for ever, as if possible he would hide himself in some new country.

I was in the act of reading this note when King Charles entered the apartment, and taking it from me, read it. He laughed a little, and said —

“Poor boy ; he has felt the first bitterness thy sex can impart, but time will heal his wound, and you’ll have him back as gay as ever.”

Then, as I shook my head, he added, kindly—

“If he does not come we’ll send for him. He is a good lad, and has done us no injury in breaking his own heart, so cheer up, little one, tears have no right in those eyes, and there’s more than one near who would endure even this boy’s distress to win tears from thee. Nay, little one, do not take it to heart. Off with you to her Majesty, and let her comfort you. Women are all alike ; they have always tears ready.”

As I had declined accompanying the royal pair to Holland, I was appointed to a vacant post in her Majesty’s bedchamber, and the joy of being so much with her comforted me a good deal for Lawrence’s departure.

Ever since the adventure with Buckingham, my preserver, whose name I found was Ronald Stewart, a sort of cousin of the King’s, and a great favourite, had been constantly about Court.

I liked him much better than many of the others who strove to attract my attention. I owed him my release on that night, and was not a little proud that

he should select me from those who would willingly have had him with them.

Day after day he danced attendance upon the Queen, and finally succeeded in being appointed gentleman equerry to her Majesty, so that our hours were now spent entirely together, and I grew to look upon his presence as something necessary to my daily routine of duty or amusement.

Lawrence did not remain long with the fleet, but was sent back with despatches, and again installed as private secretary to the Duke of York, which, however disagreeable to him at first, he could not refuse, and time soon taught him to endure even this.

He was sad and depressed at times, but at others reckless of what he did. Suddenly his depression took a new form, and he began to mix up with those belonging to the Romanist faith. For this I blamed Mary Beatrice, who sought every means of making converts to her own religion, and took great interest in poor Lawrence.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“Oh ! when the last account ’twixt heaven and earth
Is to be made, then shall this hand and seal
Witness against us to damnation.
How oft the sight of means to do ill deeds
Makes deeds ill done. Hadst not thou been by,
A fellow by the hand of nature marked,
Quoted and signed to a deed of shame,
This murder had not come.”—SHAKESPEARE.

It was now that a whisper, which for weeks had been thrilling through the country, suddenly burst upon us with its full strength : and this was the discovery of the Popish Plot.

The discoverer was one who had already been brought before public notice by his ability in worming out suspected treachery ; and, although his bad character should have at once thrown a doubt upon any assertion made by him, his very vices sharpened his wits, and making him desperate, rendered him a useful tool in the hands of a designing coterie. This man was Titus Oates, infamous in history and in character. No sooner had the first roll of this new thunder rung in our ears, than the names of those accused pealed louder still. With horror and amazement I heard Lawrence branded as a conspirator and traitor ; and, in company with some of the noblest in the land, he was thrown into the Tower to await trial.

For some days, I hoped he might be set at liberty,

scarcely believing my senses that he should be a prisoner ; but a confirmed report reached me of his change of religion, and then only I began to fear, not his innocence, but his ability to withstand the accusations heaped upon him.

Queen Catherine felt much for me, and obtained permission for me to see him, thinking an interview might conduce to my comfort.

I found him not a whit cast down, rather indeed triumphant at the fate he had almost courted, and received me with a smile, laughing at my fears, saying they could not find him guilty of anything, but that he had been seized by the enemies of the Duke of York, and must bear the weight of others' crimes as well as his own.

I was somewhat easier, though I did not feel so sanguine as Lawrence ; and feared he might, being too confident, neglect some means of establishing his innocence. His parting words, too, though uttered in jest, sounded to my heated imagination like a prediction of his fate ; they were almost the same he had used the very day I first saw him, and that moment came vividly before me, as he said—

“ If I am a martyr, Mary, you taught me how to endure to the last. I may after all die upon a scaffold ! ”

These words made my blood run cold, and I would have returned to beg him to use every endeavour to bring on his acquittal soon, but his guards hurried me away with these fatal words ringing in my ears, and with as heavy a heart as it was ever my lot to bear.

On my way back to the palace, Walter Fenton joined

me, looking dull and dispirited, but speaking lightly of everything of the day. I had not seen him for some days, and now his depressed looks struck me so much that I could not forbear asking the cause.

He made no answer for a few moments, and then looking in my face, said in a sad tone—

“Can you be so blind? If so, I am indeed most miserable.”

Tones are often much more expressive than words; and now the tone of his voice told me a secret I would willingly have left unknown.

My involuntary expression of sorrow unnerved him at the moment, and overcome by his feelings, he told me the whole story of his love, of his disappointment on finding that I loved another, and how he had waited patiently, hoping I might yet learn to love him.

Alice, to whom he had told his tale, counselled him to wait silently, and he had done so. My heart sunk within me as I heard his words, and thought of the deep pain whatever I could say must give him.

All I could do was to thank him, and tell him I, too, was miserable. Poor fellow, he understood me, and pressing his lips upon my hand, he said—

“I will do what I can for him, for your sake.”

Alice wrote afterwards, and told me he had made her his confidante, adding, in her own kind way, how sorry she was to relinquish the hope she had so ardently desired of becoming my sister, telling me to use my influence with Walter to rouse him from his disappointment, and bring back his old lightheartedness.

This letter comforted me, as I felt, in not loving

him, I was in a way slighting my dearest friend Alice, so that, on seeing the light she took it in, my mind was at ease. After this I did not see Fenton for a long time, although I heard of his doings from Alice, who still appeared to entertain a hope that I might change my mind.

The evidence against poor Lawrence was so strong, and so subtly invented, as to rouse the most painful apprehensions in all our breasts.

The Duke of York exerted himself much in secret to bring up proofs in his favour, but from the known malignity of the party (to whose machinations we attributed the pretended discovery already mentioned) he dare do little openly, and so his exertions were not of much avail.

The next few weeks are marked in my memory by many bitter recollections. One after another, men whom I had heard revered from my childhood, were seized and committed to the Tower, upon no greater suspicion than the words of this Titus Oates ; who, it was said, had risen from the lowest ranks, and whose character was such as to have compelled him to seek a livelihood by the most disreputable means.

I was very anxious to see this man, and when I did, to my surprise, I recognised in him the same features which had appeared at my home the night from which all my troubles seem to have dated.

There was no change in his hideous countenance, the very same heart-sickening expression of low fawning duplicity, the side glance that spoke so plainly of a cowardly nature, the bent head of a mock humility ;

and what, to me, was the most revolting of all, the low, hypocritical whine with which he spoke, interlarding his lies with the holiest names and comparisons.

The King being anxious to satisfy his conscience as to the truth of the overwhelming accusations brought against his personal friends, had their accuser introduced privately to the Queen's apartments, when both he and her Majesty questioned him closely upon his authority; and I shall never forget the pain with which I saw the influence this man speedily gained over the King, and how, as he saw this power, he grew bolder in his speech, until he spoke so insolently as to bring the listener to his senses, and call down a rebuke upon his disrespectful manner, whereupon he shrank back again, and whined forth his apologies, and I was astonished the King could be so blind.

When Lawrence's trial came on, I obtained leave to be present, that I might hear the true nature of the charges brought against him; nor was I the only lady there; many of his friends attended, and, in spite of the popular feeling about Oates, a number of ladies, whose husbands held exalted appointments, attended, and openly expressed their interest in him.

I secured a retired seat, from which I could see and hear without being prominently conspicuous myself; but far off, and hid as I was by a dark hood, poor Lawrence recognised me at once, and I saw he was well pleased. He even sent one of the messengers to me to bid me "Good day" in his name, which gave me courage to bear even the dreadful accusations they brought against him.

When he spoke in his defence, I felt the blood rush like fire through my veins, and knew not that I had risen and stood with clasped hands, until a hand was laid upon my shoulder, and a low voice whispered to me to be composed.

I felt abashed, and looked round to see who spoke. It was Ronald Stewart, who, without my knowledge, had followed me, and, at the Queen's request, had managed to get a seat close to mine.

"Oh, Ronald!" I said, using, in my agitation, his Christian name, "will they not believe him?"

"No, they will not!" he replied. "Liars and fools! Oh! if I were King for one month, by God, I'd not leave one of the dastardly crew! Look! look at that villain, Oates—no wonder you are astonished. How can men believe such a scoundrel?"

As he spoke, Oates had risen, and, with downcast eyes and pretended humility, was addressing the judge, contradicting, word by word, all that Lawrence had said, and taking out a handful of letters, he laid them down, begging the judge to consider their contents. The letters were Lawrence's (written principally in moments of excitement); with a few notes found in his private desk, in which he spoke warmly of his affection for the Romanist faith, wishing that King Charles had long ago embraced it—dating all the troubles of his reign from his first attempt to conciliate the angry and factious bodies of Protestants.

Then came a long correspondence between him and Père la Chaise, which, although entirely dictated by the Duke of York, and without any design upon the

government, was at once seized upon, and so read as to create an almost universal belief in his guilt.

I saw Lawrence's cheeks flush, as one by one these private notes, in which he had laid bare the working of his heart, were read derisively before a crowded court; and though few, if any, had the key to their real meaning, yet there was light enough to elicit sneering pity and pretended commiseration.

The trial had lasted two days. On the evening of the second, I had permission to spend an hour or two with Mr. Burnett; and not finding him in, as I expected, only stayed a portion of the time; and wishing to see Alice's garden, to give a report of it in my next letter, I walked there instead of waiting for the coach.

I spent longer than I intended looking about amongst Alice's pet flowers; so that, before I thought of returning, darkness was gathering fast, and long ere I got half way to Mr. Burnett's house, it had set in a miserably dark, misty night. Yet I cared little for this, and gathering my cloak a little closer, I hurried along, avoiding as much as possible the public streets.

I was thus almost running down a narrow lane, leading into Oxford Street, when I was startled by hearing footsteps, and turning, saw two men hurrying after me. My natural impulse was to conceal myself in a doorway. I had scarcely done so, when they stopped within a few yards of me. To move was now impossible, so I sat perfectly still.

They commenced an earnest conversation, but in so low a tone that I could not catch a word they said. On

hearing a low whistle on the other side of the street, they were silent, and seemed to wish to conceal themselves.

A quick step approached, and a man appeared, carrying a bright lantern, by the light of which I recognised the face of one of the magistrates I had seen that day. He had scarcely passed me, when the man I had been watching sprung out upon him, and, after a short struggle, he fell to the ground. One of them ran to the next corner, and whistled thrice ; at which a coach drove up ; and I, turning to look where he had fallen, was startled to see him standing upright, as I had imagined him dead ; but looking more closely, I saw that one of his assailants was supporting him in that position, and, when the coach stopped, seemed to carry rather than lead him to it ; and then told the driver to go to Primrose Hill, as the gentleman had fainted.

When the last sound of the wheels had died away, I ventured from my hiding-place, and, trembling with horror, crept along under the shadow of the house, fearing every sound, almost sinking with dread when the rumble of a coach in the distance reached my ears.

As soon as I reached Mr. Burnett's house, I ran up to his room, intending to tell what I had just seen ; but the door was fastened inside ; so, after knocking and getting no answer, I turned to go away, supposing he had not come back ; but meeting Margery upon the stairs, she told me he had come in as usual, and, after taking some refreshment, had retired. We went

together to his door, and again tried to gain admittance. As he did not answer, I grew alarmed, and sent Margery to bring the men who waited with my coach, and, by my orders, they broke the door open. Then my worst fears were realised.

My dear old friend lay senseless upon the hearth, having fallen down just as he reached the bell. When I had seen him laid upon his bed, and made Margery help me to rub his feet and head, I sent off for medical aid. All our efforts to rouse him were fruitless ; and when the doctor arrived I had to bear the dreadful intelligence that the fit was one of palsy, and that all hope of his recovery was over.

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Thus, death was busy with my treasures again. And while one of the few remaining stood upon the brink of the precipice, another lay dying before me.

We watched his bed all night ; towards morning I had almost hoped he would rally, but the fit returned at daybreak, and his gentle spirit passed away without even a sigh—indeed, so quietly, that though I held his hand in mine and watched his breathing, I could not tell the moment that he became immortal.

CHAPTER XIX.

"I held a parley with my tears,
My tears that fell like rain.

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True that for thee I would have died,
Or lived all fear above ;
And rudest shocks of life defied
With an o'ermastering love."

E. C. MOGRIDGE.

THIS loss was a great trial to me, and coming at the time it did seemed doubly severe. Utterly unable to rouse myself to any exertion, I was nearly being laid up with a bad illness, from which I was only saved by my increasing anxiety for Lawrence, whose accusers, since the discovery of a terrible murder, attributed to the Romanists (the unfortunate victim being a magistrate before whom Titus Oates gave his evidence) had become doubly irate, and clamoured openly for the blood of those lying in the Tower.

It may seem strange to my reader, but I never thought of connecting this murder with the events I had witnessed the night of Mr. Burnett's death, and it was not till long after that, in talking of the events of the time, I happened to mention it, and found that I must have been witness of this very murder, falsely laid to the Papists' charge.

England rang with horror against the perpetrators of such a deed. The mob, that gathered round the

body, threatened to attack the Tower, and obtain revenge for themselves ; day and night infatuated men and women, driven wild by the lies and money lavished on them by the party headed by Titus Oates, paraded the streets, assaulting every one they imagined a Romanist, and even openly insulted the Queen, who now seldom ventured beyond the palace gardens ; yet this and every other minor trial was driven from my head by the terrible decision of the court upon Lawrence.

His sentence was—Death !

When it was told in the palace there was a general outburst of sorrow. Lawrence was a favourite with all, and the cause of his fate seemed so groundless that it was scarcely known to any.

What was sorrow to those who only knew him as an acquaintance was death to me—utter annihilation of every hope or wish for the future. I had loved him with my whole heart ; one by one those few who had occupied a place in it had been taken away, and its whole force concentrated on this one object.

For hours after the news reached me I lay in a state of stupor, the good Queen sitting with her arms round me, and doing all a mother could for my comfort ; but, like Rachel, I “ refused to be comforted ”—the light of my life was darkened ; there was but one rest—the grave ; but one object before me—the scaffold, reeking with the blood of my beloved. In vain I pressed my trembling hands upon my eyes, or hid them in the Queen’s breast—the vision would not leave me.

After hours of agony, which none but one who has felt as I did could imagine, a new strength came upon

me, and scarcely aware of what I did, I rose and went to the Tower. My name, and the orders of the Queen's equerry, who attended me, gained me admittance, and I found myself in the presence of the condemned. As I entered a mist arose before me. I could not see him I sought, and in my agony cried out—

“Where is he?” Then, as no one spoke, I seemed to lose all reason, and sank down.

When brought to my senses I was lying upon Lawrence's breast, clasped in his arms. I, sobbing, though tearless, besought him to let me die. All restraint and thought of reserve was gone. He listened to me as I told him the story of my love. When I ended, without saying one word in reply, he knelt at my feet, and taking my hands in his, asked my pardon.

“Pardon!” I said; “pardon for what? For being the idol of my life, the guide of my actions, the only one I ever loved. Oh! Lawrence! Lawrence! beloved of my soul! tell me you love me. Even now, at the last moment, say but that word, and I shall raise up my head and defy the world. Oh! that word, Lawrence; but one little word.”

I knelt before him, my heart throbbing on my lips, my whole soul hanging on his answer. It was as I knew it would be, and felt rather than heard him say—

“Too late, too late.”

I rose from my knees, and stood before him. How long I know not, but it was his arm that guided me to a seat, and then, as I gradually began to understand what he said, I heard—

"Do you remember years ago, when I first saw you. You spoke of death as a martyr's and a patriot's end. Dear sister, do you think I am either?"

A few seconds passed ere I could reply, and then, as the thought that he had deserted the faith of his forefathers came over me, I could only say—

"God knows, my brother."

He looked sadly at me, saying—

"*You* do not know, Mary? Then God pity me; for if your heart cannot throw a light over my death, what can I expect from a cold world."

I could only sob and ask him to forgive me. Seeing my distress, he tried to explain his views, but this only increased my sorrow. I could see nothing but death, body and soul, and I besought him to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

"I do, Mary," he replied; "I do, with all my heart."

I had been taught to believe no Papist thought of the Christ, and the idea that I might have wronged them now forced itself upon me. He saw, and understood what I felt.

"A Romanist does believe in the Lord. He believes all you do, only more, for he does not limit the justice of God, and believes that he will not condemn irrevocably for the deeds done in a short life, but, by an intermediate state, would give the sinner another chance of obtaining an entrance into His kingdom. He believes that the living may pray for the dead, making their peace with God. Will you try and believe this for me? Remember I am not dead, either to you or my God; and whatsoever a man asks, believing,

he shall receive. I do not ask you to be a Romanist, Mary ; God forbid I should so lead you from your Church ; but do not judge harshly, if some of those you once called brothers, seek peace in the breast of a Church whose precepts speak ease to the burthened heart, and forgiveness to the most hardened sinner."

His eyes gleamed with a wild light as he spoke, and I did not, nay, could not, speak. Why should I combat with him at the hour of death ? Why try to darken the hopes he clung to ? Our interview was now nearly over ; the darkening room told me of the parting hour ; so I only bent my head, and said—

"God have mercy upon me a sinner."

The hour came, and we parted.

Heaven only, who knoweth the secrets of all, and seeth the heart of man, could understand the unspeakable agony of that parting.

As the kind-hearted governor led me away, I heard Lawrence utter a cry, the first sound of anguish he had given way to, but I dare not answer, and could only cling silently to my guide.

CHAPTER XX.

“He, the young, the brave, who cherished
Noble longings for the strife,
By the roadside fell, and perished,
Weary with the march of life.”—LONGFELLOW.

TERRIBLE dreams haunted me all that night.

At one time I was drowning in an ocean of blood, through which I was beckoned on by Lawrence. Suddenly the blood passed away, and flowery plains surrounded me ; angels floated in the clear air. Again I saw Lawrence—this time fastened to a stake, the white flames encircling his quivering limbs ; then again he was on a reeking scaffold, calling down vengeance on his murderers.

I had determined to attend his execution, and was clothing myself in black, when the Queen entered. She suspected what I was about, and fearful of my meeting with insult, did all she could to dissuade me ; but finding it of no avail, she at last consented, upon condition of my taking Ronald Stewart as a protector, to which I agreed, caring little who was with me, so long as I obtained my wish.

Ronald, seeing me utterly oblivious of his presence, and feeling deeply for me, led me on in silence, carefully avoiding the principal streets, which were now becoming much crowded, every one pressing in one direction, and all of them in holiday dress, laughing

and talking as if there was no such thing in the world as grief or death.

Once I heard Lawrence's name, but ere I could hear more Ronald had turned round, and by a look checked the speaker.

As we drew near the fatal spot, the crowd grew denser, and it was with great difficulty we pushed forward. Suddenly a strange sound thrilled through the air—it was the voice of the multitude, and told *they* were coming ; and after a few seconds of breathless expectation, the procession appeared in sight.

My eyes grew dim as I gazed, straining them to catch a glimpse of the victim. At last I did so, and almost at the same moment he recognized me. A bright flush rose to his face as he leant hastily forward and called me. I heard my name above the roar of the crowd, and quitting Ronald's arm, sprang forward. In another instant I was beside the cart, but ere I could reach his outstretched hand, it had moved on.

Even now, though well nigh forty years have passed by since that fearful day, I remember every incident as if it had just happened ; I can see before me in the dim twilight the very gleam of enthusiastic triumph that lighted his face as he called upon that multitude to witness that he died "true to his God and his country."

Many in the crowd seemed anxious to prove their sympathy, while others, led on by the Oates faction, raised up cries of contempt, shouting out insulting names, and cursing him and his religion as the work of the devil.

I can still see the mass of eager faces, the terrible sea of eyes ; I can *hear* the dreadful silence when the last prayer was said ; and Lawrence knelt beside the block, and clasping a little cross to his lips, he laid his head down never to lift it again.

All was silent as the grave, until a dull heavy blow boomed upon the air, and then, as one mighty voice, a groan broke from the crowd, followed by hisses and cheers, as, holding up the streaming head, the executioner cried—

“Thus perish all enemies of the King and Holy Protestant faith.”

I fainted, and only recovered my senses as I was driven along in the direction of the palace. Ronald sat opposite, gazing compassionately in my face.

“Be comforted, Lady Mary,” he said ; “God’s will is for the best. Poor Lawrence is in heaven. God grant we may all be ready to go.”

I had not wept till now, but something in his tone seemed to release the fountain of my tears, and for some time I sobbed helplessly, leaning back and covering my face. Ronald remained silent, thinking, I suppose, my tears were the best outlet for my grief. He only took my hand for an instant, and pressed it to his lips, looking at me so kindly that I felt more soothed than if he had tried to console me by words.

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I fear all this is but sad, but though my story may seem so, it is not willingly, but of necessity. This last seemed to be the climax of all my griefs, for what greater calamity could befall me now ? My existence

had lost its beacon light ; the romance of my life had passed ; my girlhood had fled, and left me a grave and lonely woman.

At first I thought, nay, hoped I might die, and pass away from the hard and aimless life which seemed now before me.

Hour after hour during my long illness (which, brought on by excitement and grief, followed the day of execution) did I lie with clasped hands, beseeching God to take me away from the evil to come.

Hour after hour I pictured to myself the radiant gleam that lighted up Lawrence's face, when he turned from the eager crowd and looked up to the calm blue sky.

The first thing that aroused me was a visit from Alice, who, hearing of my state, by the Queen's own desire, came like a faithful friend to weep with one that wept.

Ah ! well do I remember the day of her coming. The winter had passed away during my illness, and, scarcely knowing that the spring had come again, I sat gazing from the open window.

The fresh air blew upon my cheek, lifting my hair from my neck, but I felt it not. The birds sang in the green boughs, but I heard them not. What were birds or fresh breezes to me ? My sunshine was lost in the darkness of the tomb, and the groans of the multitude on that fatal day still rang in my ears.

I sat for a long time at the window, looking out, but seeing nothing ; at last, I became aware that some one was with me ; a soft arm stole round my neck ;

my head was drawn fondly to a warm bosom, and a voice, so sweet that I could have fancied it was that of an angel, whispered—

“Is not the spring lovely, Mary?”

I looked vacantly up in her beautiful face, and for the first time since my illness felt there was something left for me in the world.

Alice's presence woke many thoughts, and, busied with these, I did not mark the flight of time, so that when the Queen came I was startled to see the full moon shining upon us, making Alice's face appear to wear a halo, and look so beautiful, that even Catherine, who seldom expressed much admiration for beauty, stood regarding her with a pleased smile; then kissing her upon the forehead, said—

“You look like a spirit, child.”

Alice bent down and thanked her.

“Now, Mary,” said her Majesty, in a different tone, “you must let this friend of yours doctor you. She is to share your room until you are strong enough to go away with her, which for your sake I hope may be soon.”

“Where to, your Majesty?” I asked, listlessly.

“To her own wild country, my dear, our kingdom of Wales. They are perfect savages there, are they not, Lady Alice? They tell wonderful stories of your countrywomen; how they attire themselves in taller hats than the Puritans, and such as were never seen in any other country under the sun.”

Alice defended her country merrily, and said they were not half so savage as the natives of Scotland, who

went about almost naked, and after hiding in holes and caves all day, came out in the evening to rob each other, and dance to the shrieking of horrible instruments called pipes.

"A truce to your abuse of our Scotch subjects, Lady Alice," said the King, in a jovial tone, as he, entering unperceived, had heard the description ; and now, bending his laughing face low before the fair calumniator of his country, he kissed her hand rather impressively.

Catherine's cheek grew red as she glanced keenly from one to the other, her countenance assuming an expression I had never noticed before—a blending of sternness and sadness it was painful to witness.

"I did not expect you would honour us with your presence," she said, in a cold tone, looking at her husband.

"A glad surprise then, dear Kate : unexpected pleasures are, or at any rate ought to be, the greatest. I had no notion our Court was to be graced by such a fair little Welshwoman, for, from her own words, I gather this lady belongs to that wild country."

The stern expression instantly faded from the Queen's cheek, giving place to her usual gentle smile. She was once more the same confiding, forgiving wife as I ever had seen her.

Thus was she so easily pleased and satisfied by Charles ; and he, knowing her ready belief in his innocence, took great pains to have a plausible explanation always ready, never permitting himself to appear annoyed by her asking, though, from what happened

every day, it was evident the poor Queen had much cause for disquietude.

The King knew his own faults as well as any one else, and if there was ever a regret for his weakness, it was when he thought of his confiding wife ; sometimes, though I fear seldom, he compared her gentle manners and conversation with the vulgar beauties for whom she was so often forgotten.

The moment he saw Alice he was struck by her delicate beauty, and the musical softness of her voice, but fearful of Catherine's suspicions, controlled his admiration much more carefully than was his wont.

"I must present the Lady Alice Fenton to you, Charles ; her name is already known."

"Fenton," said Charles, hastily ; "is this William Fenton's daughter?"

"I am, your Majesty. My father has been, I trust, a faithful servant."

Charles looked vexed, but chased away the look as he again took her hand, and said, playfully—

"We bid Alice Fenton welcome in her father's name, and in her own beg her to remain, long to be our loveliest flower."

Alice coloured, and drew back, saying hastily, "I am an invalid, your Majesty, and beg you to excuse me, and permit me to devote my time to my dear friend, Lady Mary."

"That is a hard and uncourteous request," said Charles, playing with his sword, but still gazing earnestly at Alice ; "is it not, Catherine ? Can *you* not help to gain us such an ornament?"

Alice's face grew crimson, and the tears started to her eyes, as Catherine, alarmed at her husband's admiration, began to see a new rival in poor Alice, and looking sternly at her, said—

“The Lady Alice must always be entitled to every honour a virtuous Englishwoman can desire, both for her own beauty and her father's sake.”

“More for her beauty, by God ! than anything in the world. I never saw such a face !” exclaimed Charles, vehemently, and so impressively that no one could doubt the truth of his affirmation, much less the poor Queen, who looked still more angry, and surveyed the innocent cause for some minutes. She then turned to the King, and thinking Alice would not understand her, said in French—

“She is beautiful enough, even to aspire to more than your Majesty's admiration.”

Alice was unhappily more accomplished than Catherine supposed, and although living so remote from Court, was fully aware of the gossip that went on, so that this allusion to the King's weakness struck her at once.

“For Heaven's sake stop this, Mary,” she whispered, hiding her face on my neck, down which I felt the hot tears trickling.

The situation of all was equally unpleasant, perhaps most so to me, I being attached to each, and devoted above all to the thoughtless cause, the unfortunately careless King. I had never seen the Queen display so much anger before, and could not but feel it was rather the outbreak of pent-up passion that had been

long rankling at her heart, than feelings caused by the present interview. Charles seemed to think so too, and going up to her spoke in a low tone about letting people's evil tongues disturb her peace, or malign him in her ears. I did not catch her reply, but it appeared to vex him much, and putting his arm round her he led her away, closing the door with a sharp, angry sound, showing, as plainly as words could do, the state of his temper.

"Oh, Mary, let us go away!" said Alice. "What can the Queen think of me? Come with me to our quiet home; I can never, never stay here."

I tried to compose her, assuring her of the kindness of both King and Queen, and that the latter had many trials, so that if sometimes an apparently slight cause moved her, the real cause might have happened long before. After a time, I persuaded Alice of the truth of my assertion, calming her agitation, though I myself felt anything but resigned, and for hours after she was fast asleep, lay pondering over my future duties, and the events of the morrow.

Oh, how much there lies in that little word, "to-morrow!" The sick man looks forward in hope of being better, the dying of an everlasting awaking, the broken-hearted to peace, and the parted to re-union. Many a bright hope had I seen clouded on the expected to-morrow. Many a fair dream had faded away, leaving me scarcely daring to think of another to-morrow, and yet a gentle spirit of hope again stole into my heart, and I raised my head, and hoped for "to-morrow."

CHAPTER XXI.

DISAPPOINTMENT.

“I loved him more than man was loved,
Worship was but a name
For the deep passion that had moved
My spirit’s fiercest flame,
And yet an hour has overthrown,
Love that in long years had grown.”

WHEN the usual hour of Queen Catherine’s visit approached, I began, for the first time in my life, to feel a nervous wish that something might happen to prevent it, and in hopes of being able to send Alice out of her way, did not mention her custom of coming at a particular hour. She seemed to have forgotten the troubles of the night before, and talked happily of her home, and the delight she anticipated of showing me her favourite haunts ; after describing the scenery, she sat awhile silent, and I was on the point of asking her to continue her description, when she said, abruptly, “What time does the Queen visit you, Mary ?” and upon my telling her, rose, and said she would go upon the terrace for an hour.

I had never seen Alice look stern before ; her meekness and humility had been so prominent as to annoy me at times, but now they had vanished, and I saw by nature she was even as proud as I was. I rejoiced a little at the thought of it, after she had left the room,

tor, let me confess, I had often felt ashamed of my imperfections.

Alice had not been gone many minutes when the Queen entered, and I, with some trepidation, rose to meet her.

"Sit down, child," she said, in her kindest tone, "I am not queen here, you know—cannot you let me be at peace sometimes? But where is your friend?"

I felt my cheeks glowing as I answered, and she, seeing my confusion, said—

"Are you ill, my little pet, or has something vexed you? Tell me, perhaps I can cure you."

Her kindness overcame me, and I began to cry, as with some hesitation I said—

"I was so sorry, yesterday, your Majesty; poor Alice did not mean to look beautiful."

"Eh, child?" said Catherine, smiling, "so this is it; poor Alice, she cannot help her pretty face. I do not blame her. Oh, no, Mary! I have sorrows you do not know of—the greatest sorrow and pain that can befall a loving wife, one, please God, you may never have. I am often wretched, but try to do my duty, and if I fail, may the holy Mother of God forgive me, and lay to my charge the transgressions which my faults may in a manner induce him to commit."

It was the first time she had ever hinted at the scandalous proceedings of Charles, and I felt proportionably confused, utterly at a loss what to answer, or how to comfort her evident grief. She had, however, eased her heart by imparting even this, and the outburst, slight as it was, swept away the remnants of last day's anger.

"Where is Alice Fenton?" she said, after a time ;
"do not let her avoid me."

I proposed to call her, but hearing where she was, Catherine bade me rest, and went to join her.

About a quarter of an hour elapsed, and then she returned alone, but flushed and impatient, throwing herself upon a chair, she covered her face with her hands, and sat long silent.

I saw she was deeply moved, but left it to her to explain the cause if she wished ; this she at last did, saying, through her hands—

"I never saw him proved before. Oh ! that I was as beautiful as she is."

My heart beat thick, a sudden conviction came over me that the King had been with Alice, and I trembled, not for her virtue, but lest any of the courtiers might have witnessed the interview.

"You do not speak," said Catherine, looking at me. "Did *you* know he was there ? But no, no, how could you ? Listen, child, you are my friend ; I have few, if any, except yourself, who can forget I am Queen, and think of me as their equal. Alas ! I am less, I am a forsaken and unloved woman. They told of his faults, but I refused to believe them. Nay, I closed my eyes and ears lest I should be tempted to doubt him ; it was long ere I did, Mary, and when I found the truth, my heart grew cold within me. Nor can you wonder ; I had worshipped him as a being above all others ; I had only lived in the light of his love, a love I believed pure as the Heaven itself. My own heart was laid bare before him, and his, I fondly hoped, was also to me. I was wrong, Mary. I found I had

worshipped a graven image ; the idol of my life was shattered ; the faith of my life broken ; and although I loved him as deeply as before, my love was a different love, it was a love fraught with pain, and became agony in its intense anxiety and jealousy. I had never been jealous before ; now the slightest look sent the bitter sting to my heart, and I grew a burthen to my own soul. I watched as a mother watches her child, and prayed day and night that he might be pure ; but to-day, Mary, this very hour, my hopes are shattered. Again, I never thought him base, and untruthful, and heartless—ay, heartless ! for one who would strive to urge a poor girl to evil, must be base indeed. And this man is my husband !”

She uttered the words hastily, as if in desperation ; I rose, and crossing the room, fell at her feet.

“Not there, child,” she said ; “here, beside me. I am a lonely woman ; let me feel I have one who loves me. Oh ! that I had never come to this cold unkind land. Why did they send me, to be neglected and insulted ? Oh, Charles ! you knew me not, or we might have been happy even here.”

The poor Queen leant her face upon my shoulder. What could I say to comfort her, but an untruth, and I felt it was so in saying it, namely, that she ought not to give credence to such tales as were against her husband’s honour.

She only shook her head, saying—

“They are too true ; I know it all now. God pity me. You love King Charles, I know,” she continued, “nothing will change such love as you feel, for yours

is not adoration of a heart, but loyalty of a noble spirit. I dare tell you what I would not breathe to another, and what is breaking my poor heart. It has been God's will to withhold from me the pleasure of having a child, and the country, your country, Mary, requires an heir. James of York is hated, and though the Princess has married one of your faith, he is an alien, and not a whit more acceptable to the feelings of the country. Well, they forget kings can feel, and urge him to give an heir to the throne, by divorcing me, and taking another wife. They may gain their end; indeed, I feel they will. I shall go back to my country—ah! how to return, a deserted, widowed wife. I have but one hope—and that is in the marriage of the Duke. Then only may I escape, and such is the fate of Royalty.”

The Queen spoke so passionately, that neither she nor I were aware of the presence of the King; and it was her change of countenance, and exclamation of “Charles,” that led me to the discovery.

Before I could collect my thoughts, I was pushed aside by the King as he threw himself by Catherine, and drew her towards him.

“Kate, Kate,” he exclaimed, in a broken voice, as he looked keenly in her face, “my own wife, what is all this? Why unburthen your heart to a poor sick child, and turn away from one by right your comforter? Kate, wife, darling, turn to me. Why choose her?”

“She loves me, Charles, and there are none else.”

“None to love you, Kate?” he exclaimed, reproachfully. “Why say this? is my love nothing?”

“Your love,—oh ! husband of my youth—your love, *when it was* mine, was my life, and now even the remembrance gives me strength to endure.”

“Kate, is this like yourself? is it kind?”

Thus far I had been an unwilling spectator, and was now trying to creep away, when Charles recalled me, and taking my hand, said—

“She has been like a mother to thee, Mary. Comfort her as thou wouldst thine own parent.”

CHAPTER XXII.

“If mortal love might win my heart
Ye would na ask in vain,
But in the darksome grave it's laid,
Ne'er, ne'er to rise again.”—SCOTCH SONG.

AFTER some time it was decided I should give up my nominal duty at Court, and seek health with Alice amongst her far-famed Welsh mountains.

I felt only one regret at leaving the palace; that was parting with the Queen, but even this was slightly alleviated by a feeling of restraint which had marked her actions since the day she spoke so openly to me of the feelings of her own heart.

I have often seen it thus during my experience of life. The heart is apt to fear one who knows its secret trials, and too much confidence breeds coldness and constraint. So it was with my kind mistress, for since she raised me to her confidence a coldness had sprung up, and we both looked anxiously forward to the following year to show us the truth.

Upon the eve of our journey the Queen sat long with me, giving me advice, talking of my father and mother, and after that spoke of Ronald Stewart, telling me to try and return the affection he had given me.

It was in vain to attempt any explanation of my own feelings with regard to this wish. She only

smiled, and, patting my cheek, said I was yet young, and would learn sense before I came back. Meantime, all she required was that I should bid him farewell personally. I consented to do this to please her, although caring very little about it ; but yet, as the hour of his coming drew near, I grew nervous, and would willingly have withdrawn my consent.

When he entered, the thought of the last place at which I had seen him, namely, the EXECUTION, was so vivid that I was unable to address him for some time, and sat with my face buried in my hands. He understood me, and, walking to the window, stood with his back towards me for a minute or two until I called him, and begging him to pardon my weakness, asked him to sit by me and tell me of himself. My request was granted more fully than I expected or wished, as he explained the exact state of his own family and fortune, of his poverty and indolence, and utter dependence upon his relation to the King.

I had known this before, but was pleased that he should tell me himself, and listened with attention.

He next spoke of my own position, and of the difficulties I would meet with, struggling through life alone and unprotected. This of course brought him to speak of his own affection ; and how ardently he besought me to let him shield me, by giving him my hand, if not my heart, which he said he would win by constant devotion.

I could not answer as he wished ; my soul sickened at the idea of being a wife. I had no wish to live. I was weary of life—of its duties and troubles—and

would willingly have shut myself out from all participation ; and told him so, as a complete ending to all his hopes.

He, however, took my confession very quietly, and, as he bid me farewell, said—

“ You cannot forbid me to love you, Mary ; and nothing except your union with another will prevent me hoping. God bless and comfort you.”

Thus we parted. Poor Ronald had spoken openly and kindly ; but his presence recalled that fatal day, and for hours after he left me I lay in a sort of stupor, thinking only of the one who was gone.

Since Lawrence's death I had felt that he was even more my own than in life, and his continual presence seemed with me, floating round me in my dreams, until I awoke smiling, and talking to him as if in life, and the bitterness of the truth would cast me down to the earth again. All that he had told or taught me remained sacred, and even long-forgotten words or actions returned to my memory, and I sat hour after hour reading the past, as it rose upon the tablet of my heart.

Feeling thus, how could I listen to Ronald ? Alas ! I could do nothing but weep, and though I sometimes heard Alice say my sorrows would heal themselves, I could not believe her, and thought nothing would ever ease my heart.

The parting with Ronald prevented my sleeping that night, so I rose harassed and worn out to undertake our journey, and as we were obliged to start by daybreak, the reader may fancy how tired I was.

Upon arriving at our stage for the night, a lonely posting-house, we were received with great respect, refreshed by a substantial supper, and then ushered into a large wainscoted bed-room, in the centre of which stood a great four-posted bed, hung with heavy drapery, held up by grotesque old figures.

We immediately retired, to be ready and off again by daylight.

The second day we entered Wales, and passed through much fine scenery, but my heart was too heavy to feel interested even in this, and it was almost a relief when night came on, and hid from me what I should have admired, but was unable to appreciate. Long after dark I was startled from a sort of dream by Alice seizing my hand, and telling me to awake and look at her home.

On looking out I beheld a prospect that must have roused even a more depressed spirit than mine. The full moon had risen, and shone down from a cloudless sky, lighting up the loveliest view the eye can imagine.

From the rising ground where we had stopped, we looked down on a broad stream, shining like gold in the rays of the moon. It ran into a small bay, upon which the lights in the fishermen's boats twinkled here and there. At the opposite side of the river, and occupying a corner near the entrance of the bay, rose an immense rock, crowned by a stately castle. The moon, though throwing the base of the cliffs and the water at their feet into black shade, lighted up the castle almost as clearly as at noonday.

Suddenly a trumpet rang across the water, it was answered by one of our outriders, and almost instantaneously a cannon pealed out a welcome, and in a few minutes I saw a boat shoot out from the shadow below the castle, and approach rapidly our side of the river.

We now began to descend, and reached the landing-place just as the boat touched the shore. Alice threw open the coach-door and uttered her brother's name, then a cheer burst from the boatmen, and another gun boomed forth its welcome.

Walter's arm trembled as he put me into the boat, but he showed no other symptom of emotion.

I felt much for him, and heartily sorry that he had loved me, doubting, as we proceeded, the wisdom of trusting myself so constantly in his society, as I now might expect to be; but his cheerful tones, as he talked with Alice, for the time dispelled my apprehensions, and our arrival on shore gave me other objects to occupy my attention. As the bows grated on the rock, I heard the cheery voice of Alice's father, calling out a welcome, and was carried in his arms up the slippery stone steps, which led to a postern in the castle wall.

Walter followed, bearing Alice in a like manner, and then, after a little laughter and mirth at what Sir Walter told me was a Welsh custom, we were admitted through an iron door opening into a passage cut out of the solid rock, and leading by an easy ascent to the court-yard. Oh! how magical was the effect of the burst of light.

When we emerged from that dark gallery into the

bright moonlight that filled the court, and threw great shadows from tall turrets and towers, looking perfectly gigantic in the uncertain light, there were dancing lights illuminating the tower windows, and figures hurrying about, and uttering loud exclamations in an unknown tongue.

Astonished and delighted by the novelty of the scene, I would willingly have tarried had I not been pressed on by Alice, who saw nothing marvellous in such a familiar prospect, and was now anxious to get beside the hearth, and tell her adventures with more ease.

I was much too tired to note anything that evening, but I cannot do less than describe my impressions. After crossing the open court we ascended some steps which ran along the southern portion of the building, and led to a stone verandah, supported by handsome Saxon pillars; passing along this we entered a large door, opening on a narrow winding stair, lighted here and there by an oil lamp, and carpeted with a thick sort of matting; from this we passed into a lofty dining hall, wainscoted with panels of polished oak, and hung all round with full-length portraits of the ancestors of the Fentons.

A portion of the room was separated from the rest by a row of marble pillars, meeting a curiously painted ceiling, adorned with allegorical designs, representing the fall of man.

Three large bay windows lighted this spacious apartment, each forming a pretty little room of itself. These Alice and I found to be very pleasant resorts,

as we could make them quite private, by drawing the thick tapestry curtains.

There was a large open fireplace at one side of the dining-room, and the crackling fire that burned there threw a warm light over the whole room. Two greyhounds seemed to delight especially in its warmth, and appeared too happy to take more notice of our entrance than to look up and wag their tails, immediately relapsing into their interrupted slumber.

A noisy welcome, however, awaited us in a smaller room, to which Alice led me, and in which I found she had established a little colony of pets and flowers; for, with a care for her every wish, her father had fitted up this room like an Eastern boudoir; and certainly a more lovely or romantic bower could not have been chosen by Titania herself.

The room was an octagon, formed so as to occupy a floor of one of the towers, and commanded a double prospect; one range of windows looking towards the sea, the other upon a woodland view, through which the river ran like a silver thread, losing itself in the far-off hills, which rose as if they aspired to Heaven itself.

Within the room was everything that love could suggest, or money purchase; statues, china, reliques of many countries, books, and pictures, tastefully arranged; but, lovelier than all, was the gentle owner, as she stood, the very personification of happiness, fondling a pair of little doves, who cooed a sweet welcome.

I did not wonder that Sir William deprived himself

of many things to gratify his pride and affection for her.

It was some days before the restraint I felt in the presence of Walter wore off, but it did so in time, and I grew accustomed to see him near me; and when he departed to join the army, I felt the blank left by his absence as much as his father or sister did, but was in a great measure consoled by the frequent intelligence we now had through him of what was going on in the world, for in our isolated situation we were almost entirely ignorant of what went on, except in our immediate vicinity, and, indeed, as Sir Walter often said, London might have been under water for a week without us hearing anything about it; and certainly, though Walter's first letter made us aware of the many great events which were happening, we still clung, with a greater affection than ever, to our quiet home.

CHAPTER XXIII.

“Poor queen, so that thy state might be no worse
I would my skill were subject to thy curse.
Here did she fall a tear ; here in this place
I'll set a bank of rue, sour herb of grace,
Rue for Ruth, here shortly shall be seen
In the remembrance of a weeping queen.”

SHAKSPEARE.

It was only a few months since I had been in the bustle and excitement of a Court, and yet during that time England had rushed blindly to the edge of a mighty precipice—poor Lawrence's execution was but one among many, and Oates had reaped too rich a harvest not to tempt many as unprincipled as himself, to follow his example.

The worst of these, one Bedloe, had once been a servant in Sir William's family, who, when he heard of the plots pretended to have been discovered by this vile wretch, said, that if the Crown found it as difficult to get quit of him as he had done, he pitied them from his heart.

After this, one Dangerfield, the discoverer, and it was supposed by many, the inventor, of the plot of the “meal tub,” as it was called, secured the ear of the Parliament. Although the King resolutely set his face against the encouragement of such impostors, this man gained great renown, and obtained access to the houses of some of the greatest men in the land. Im-

portant intelligence such as this, had of course reached us in our retirement, and Sir William, by accident, heard a pretty full account of the debate upon the bill brought in to exclude the Duke of York from the throne.

Protestant though he was, he rejoiced when it was thrown out (which was brought about mostly by the bishops, all excepting three setting their faces steadfastly against it).

A sad piece of news reached us at the same time, namely, that my Lord Stafford had been convicted, and ere long would lose his head. Lord Stafford had been a great friend of Sir William's, who told me many interesting anecdotes about him.

It was on the eve of his execution that Walter reached London, and knowing his father's ancient friendship for the noble prisoner, he went openly and requested permission to bid him farewell.

His petition was granted, and not only did he see him then, and by his kindness assist to soothe his last moments, but attended him to the scaffold.

He gave us a heartrending description of the sad event : how the people crushed each other to death that they might hear his voice ; and when he asserted his innocence, how, with one voice, that great multitude burst forth—" We believe you, my Lord !" " God bless you, my Lord !" and melted even to tears—they wept for the death of one they had condemned with curses.

Our great excitement now consisted in watching for letters, and then reading them over and over, until the narrative was continued by another.

Thus I read the history of my country—a history which interested the whole world, and had well nigh ended even then—a history where man contended with God, seeking to overrule the evident working of the Almighty—a history blackened by some of the darkest crimes that blot the records of our land.

I trust my reader will not grumble if I merely glance over those years I spent in Wales, where, from the seclusion in which we lived, the world appeared a panorama, in which we looked for intelligence of friends and foes. My amusements were simple enough, and consisted in visiting the poor, relieving their wants, and sharing the good that God had given me with His less fortunate children.

I cannot say that I continued to find so much pleasure in this as I at first anticipated ; perhaps the reason was that I did not do it with such a true spirit of charity as I ought to ; and when the renown of my wealth and open-handedness, spreading abroad, brought many applicants, who not only accepted relief, but actually subsisted upon my money, giving me barely thanks in return, I felt angry, forgetting that what I did was for the Lord, and that I ought not to look for gratitude here, but for a reward in a heavenly kingdom.

Still I toiled on, in spite of many disappointments, exercising my judgment as well as I could in giving to those who deserved it. But alas ! such is the nature of man, that I, in the end, found few friends ; nay, those I offended by withdrawing my hand, when they were able to work for themselves, were treble in number to those who really thanked me.

Once or twice during the time, I received letters written by the Queen's own hand, and enlightening me upon passing events, but never even hinting at her personal story, which, from what we heard in other quarters, must have been a troubled one.

Of Ronald Stewart I heard nothing, indeed, had almost forgotten him, the only thing keeping him alive in my memory being his immediate connexion with *the dark day* of my life, the execution of Lawrence.

Though events of great importance were happening every day, they never disturbed the quiet peace of our home, only reaching us when the world had almost forgotten them, and was already speculating on some new wonder.

The trial of Lord William Russell was of so late a date, that his execution had ceased to excite the horror it did at first, long ere we knew anything, but though our mourning was late it was not less sincere, and much we wondered what the Court and Parliament would do next.

I wrote to Lady Rachel telling her how much I grieved with her, but I got no answer, she, poor thing, being for a time utterly cast down, though, so religious was she, that she rose triumphant over all these terrible afflictions, proving to the world what the heart can endure when devoted to God, and true to the love God has hallowed. Many years after I met her, and told her how much I had felt her silence, and she, with her usual candour, confessed she had avoided writing, thinking from what I said in my letter that I meant to offer her charity, which, I, however willing, had particularly avoided doing.

Things were going on quietly enough, and my health being better, I was able to ride and walk for many miles, and thus enjoy the beautiful country round me.

Walter was absent, and Sir William deeply engaged in building a new turret at the western side of the castle, when we were all thrown into the greatest distress and consternation by a special messenger arriving with the sad intelligence of the poor King's death.

At first I only thought of him as my kind friend and master, and called to mind the merry glance and jovial voice of him who was gone for ever. However, this selfish grief (if we may so call it) gave way before that of sympathy for the Queen, and again my fears for the country.

The latter was uppermost in Sir William's mind, and I did not wonder when he announced his instant journey to London. My own heart drew me thither, and I soon prevailed upon him to take us with him, though Alice, saving for my presence, would have remained in Wales as willingly as go to London, now that Walter was absent, he having been sent very shortly before the King's death with despatches to Scotland, and had by royal permission taken command of a Highland regiment under Sir Hugh Cameron.

We had heard nothing since his departure to Scotland, and only knew of his appointment by a letter, received from Sir William Temple, who mentioned it as a piece of great news, saying—

“It was the best thing that could happen to a hair-brained cavalier at such a time.”

On reaching London, we found the whole city in confusion, one party acknowledging King James,

another making mysterious allusions to the Duke of Monmouth, and a third boldly holding out for Protestant succession.

Sir William of course espoused the side of James, to whom he hastened to tender his allegiance. He was received by that wily monarch with much favour, almost immediately presented with an office of high trust, and publicly complimented by both King and Queen.

The reader may believe my first visit was to my kind friend the now Dowager Queen, and by her I was received with open arms. She appeared to find great relief in conversing with me. I once more took up my abode in the little chamber I had occupied before, and spent most hours of the day, and frequently the night also, in conversing with the Queen.

She took great pleasure in speaking of Charles's affection, and told me that in the last interview she had with him he had spoken of his sins. The list must have struck anguish to her heart, yet she herself pretended to think light of them, and to have known them before.

I was very much struck by one acknowledgment; she said, one day—"You thought me hasty and unkind to your friend, Alice Fenton. I feel I appeared so, dear, and have often regretted it, but just then I had been driven almost mad by the insolence of the Duchess of Portsmouth and another, equally lovely and innocent in look as your friend. I could not see his admiration without pain."

After a pause she continued—

"I was not angry with you, child, but ashamed of all you knew ; I felt lowered in your presence. I could not endure even your pity, and was glad when you left, and I was alone with my grief, with none who dare say a word of sympathy to my face. I could be calm before those who hated me, but my strength gave way before the gentle light of thy sweet eyes, Mary. You reminded me, by your likeness to your mother, of the days that are lost, and the remembrance added agony to my grief. Now you are with me, you must not desert me again. You are like my own child. I can talk of him to you, for you knew him best of all ; you knew that his heart was tender as a child's, that his nature was true and good ; you saw him when he was himself. My poor Charles ! it was the wickedness of those near him that darkened his character, not his own heart."

Thus did the widow try to veil the crimes of him who was now lost to her, crimes that had embittered the days of her life, rendering every action a trial, and making her a mere name in her own palace—crimes that had impaired the lustre of his great soul, and dimmed the light that might have been immortal—crimes whose gratification gave neither peace nor advantage, but left a sullied name, a broken-hearted, hopeless wife, and an heirless throne behind.

I did all I could to comfort the Queen ; but what could I say ? I could not tell her to forget the sorrows of her life—to forget these would have been to forget life itself, so commingled were its shades and sunshine.

CHAPTER XXIV.

“Every feature had the power
To aid the expression of the hour,
Whether gay wit and humour sly
Danced laughing in his light blue eye.
* * * * *
Or soft and sadden’d glances show,
A ready sympathy with woe.”—SCOTT.

I HAD much to tell of my own life and adventures while in Wales, and did my best to amuse the Queen, by recalling anything I thought might interest her. She questioned me as to Walter Fenton, but seeing the subject was disagreeable to me, changed it, and began speaking of the present King, telling me many interesting things of the Queen, whom she said every one admired; but she feared she would influence the King much, and that their united exertions would considerably disturb the tranquillity of the Church.

This conversation gave me food for meditation. I had heard from Mr. Burnett much of the horrors of a religious persecution, and trembled lest such should again darken our land. Visions of blood-stained scaffolds, burning piles, and dismantled churches, filled my dreams, and utterly unable to rest, I got up at sunrise, and went down to the palace-garden. It was the beginning of June, and the trees still wore their first green leaves; this morning the dewdrops sparkled on

every leaf and flower, some of the latter even bending beneath the diamond-like load.

Leaving the open part of the grounds, I wandered through a shrubbery, and along a tempting alley, arched overhead with woodbine and roses, and completely sheltered from the rays of the sun. I soon found myself in the heart of the shrubbery, and surrounded by a wilderness of rare trees and plants ; perfectly enchanted, I watched the play of a large fountain built of red granite, which occupied a nook so green and beautiful, that I could have fancied myself in fairyland.

Behind the fountain a walk led me to a little grotto, almost hid by creepers. Here I took refuge, and intent upon finding a retreat in times of need or wish of retirement, I began exploring the glistening palace.

The outer room, or hall, was composed entirely of spars, and cooled by a reservoir in which three small jets of water rose, giving it altogether such an unusual and romantic appearance, that I could have fancied myself in some fairy realm. Within this hall I found another room, fitted up as a boudoir, and stretching myself lazily upon a couch, gave way to pleasant dreams.

My reverie was interrupted by my name being uttered in a loud voice, and almost directly afterwards a quick step sounded upon the floor of the outer room, and the next minute Ronald Stewart stood before me.

My first impulse was to spring up, and receive him in a stately manner, but this was instantly prevented by his kneeling before me, and half-gravely, half-play-

fully, kissing my hand, as he bade me "Welcome back."

He had altered much since we met. Indeed, when I thought of it afterwards, the change was so great, that I wondered how I remembered him at all. His hair had been light and golden, it was now dark brown, matching well with the clear brown of his complexion. The addition of a beard, and long curling moustachios, added not a little to his manly and changed appearance. Nor were his manners less so. The flippancy that had in bygone days sometimes rather shocked me, had given place to a quiet, earnest gravity, that irresistibly won your confidence, and induced you to speak to him as you would to an old friend.

This struck me at once, and, insensibly to myself, I began to acknowledge and appreciate the spell of his silent but expressive affection, shining through all he said or did.

By mutual instinct we avoided anything immediately referring to the past sorrows of my life, talking of the Court, the late King, and sometimes of my sojourn in Wales. I was surprised to find he knew nearly everything that I did, even to the very names of my favourite places.

The minutes passed pleasantly away, and when I rose to return, I was much surprised to find how long I had been conversing.

Nevertheless I went in with a weight at my heart ; - a fear of the influence of this man, and a sense of his power.

Once firmly established with the Dowager Queen, I was again in the midst of all the excitement and turmoil of a political life ; but what affected me more immediately was the presence of Ronald Stewart, who I soon heard had, upon the accession of the present King, been nominated Earl of Inveresk.

He was a great favourite with both King and Queen, though he avoided mixing up in any of the disputes or party squabbles ; as also anything that could dub him a favourite. Thus he managed to retain the friendship of both, while from the moderation of his temperament, and anxiety for the prosperity of England, he gained the goodwill of both Houses. Above all, he had won the regard of my friend, particularly after I had told her one of the secrets of his life, which it would seem had actuated all he did.

A very short time after I had been established in the palace, Titus Oates was brought to trial for perjury ; and, as is well known, this was one of the first signs of the temper of the new government, and fortunately took a right course in punishing a wretch whose name was the very watchword for all that was contemptible. During the latter years of the past reign he had been pensioned and kept in luxury. His time was now come, and the mob, burning to revenge the death of those now called saints of the holy church, dragged him before a jury, who found him guilty at once ; and after consulting as to his punishment, sentenced him to be heavily fined, whipped upon several occasions in public, to be placed in prison for life, and during each year pilloried five times.

Truly his judges had ransacked their ingenuity to discover punishments for their detested countryman, who nobody then attempted to disclaim as an Englishman, though when King James and the Queen began to favour their Irish subjects, a report found much credence, stating him to be an Irishman, than which nothing could be more false.

Lord Stafford's trial was next revised, and both Houses seem bent upon reversing his sentence ; but, fortunately for the tranquillity of the country, this imprudent resolution was abandoned.

A calmness crept over the face of society. Men had grown weary of wrangling, and were disposed to try what peace would do for a while. The storm, was, however, only still, not gone, and this pause seemed to increase its strength, so that when it burst forth, it did so with greater violence than before.

Alice was much with us, and having in a great measure overcome her weakness, I wondered much at her constantly refusing everything that would lead her into public, particularly the Court.

One day, as we sat at work, the Queen, who had often spoken to me of it, asked her the reason she avoided society. Alice flushed up to the eyes, and, looking painfully embarrassed, said—

“I have many reasons, your Majesty ; more than I can state.” Then, as if unable to control her feelings, she rose, and left the apartment.

“Very strange,” said the Queen ; “what on earth can the child mean ? Do you go and ask her—I dare not.”

I followed, and found Alice sitting in her room, calm, but pale ; she seemed to divine my intentions, and stopped me immediately, saying—

“Do not ask me now, Mary. If I had desired a comforter, I would have chosen you.”

“And may I not try to soothe you?” I asked, putting my arms round her.

“Oh ! no, no ! it is impossible. I have hoped and prayed, but the wound bleeds still. The God of mercy wills I should suffer. I deserve it, so will not repine. There is a rest, even on earth, if I could only be sure it was a true one.”

She hung her head, and looked inexpressibly sad. A chill struck my own heart as she thus alluded to the Roman Catholic Church. I saw I could do no good at that moment, and went reluctantly away, trusting at some other time she might be induced to speak more openly to me upon the subject that gave her so much disquietude.

I found Lord Inveresk with her Majesty, to whom he was retailing some new gossip about the King, who, it appeared, had been driving Sir Charles Sedley's pretty daughter in the Park, and of whose beauty the Court only then consented to rave, though the lady had been there for long ; so true was it, nay, *is it*, that royal favour throws a light upon the scene.

When I had given Alice's message, Ronald began telling the Queen of the return of Lord Woodstock (who, after being in honourable exile for some years, was returning to his native land)—a nobleman whose character was one of the darkest in the annals of that

age—a profligate of even a more selfish dye than Buckingham, with a notoriety for deceit and profanity of no enviable depth. He added to the graces of a handsome face and polished address the highest talents and every accomplishment of the time, like a serpent fascinating at the same moment as he disgusted.

King Charles had, after a trial of considerable time, during which he held out against reason and the opinions of all near advisers, consented to give his favourite an appointment in America ; in fact, an honourable exile, thus relieving the Court, without exactly punishing the offender.

During his banishment, the country was every now and then electrified by the news of some escapade or adventure worthy of the knights of old rather than the quiet years and spirits of the present.

Fair ladies who had, in spite of his evil nature, rather admired my lord, heard with no small jealousy of his admiration of tropical beauties ; so that his memory was kept alive in their hearts, and talked of in secret by their firesides.

And it was at this moment he had been permitted to return.

“By the way,” said Ronald, “now I think of it, I saw the meeting between my Lord Woodstock and your friend Alice’s father ; and, by Jove, if it had not been that the Queen’s eyes were upon them, I believe there would have been drawn swords and a duel at the moment. Have you ever heard her speak of Woodstock ?” And as I had not, he continued—“I happened to be standing by when Lord Woodstock came

up—Sir William suddenly stopped speaking, and, muttering something, grew pale, but I soon saw it was anger ; for, as the other swaggered up in his own impertinent way, he wheeled sharp round, and stood with his back to my lord. This did not seem to satisfy the latter ; he returned to the charge, and this time addressed Sir William.

“ ‘ You seem to have forgotten me, Sir William,’ he said, with a sneering laugh ; ‘ I trust your family
——,’

“ ‘ Say one word more, and by the heaven over us, I strike you where you stand !’ came in a hissing whisper from Sir William’s clenched teeth, and his hand trembled with the intensity of his grasp upon his half-drawn sword. Lord Woodstock bowed superciliously, and muttered something I did not stay to hear, as seeing I was an eavesdropper I hurried away.”

Catherine questioned Lord Inveresk (by which name I was now to think of Ronald) rather closely, I thought, as to whether he knew any cause of misunderstanding between the earls. But he remembered none, as Woodstock had been long out of the country, and before that he was in France.

Finding she could arrive at no elucidation from him, she left the room, going, I supposed, to tell Alice the event.

After we were left alone, my companion talked more seriously than his wont—of life and its duties, inducing me to explain what I thought, and showing his interest when I told him of the freedom of our Church, and the self-reliance of each individual.

“I am not a good Christian,” he said; “but I think you could teach me to be one—priests never will.” These words seemed to have a deeper meaning than at first appeared, and I thought of them much, praying that he might be enlightened in the true faith.

CHAPTER XXV.

“At first, tho’ mute, she listened ; like a dream
Seemed all he said, nor could her mind, whose brain
As yet was weak, penetrate half his scheme.”

MOORE.

ALICE now remained more than ever confined to the house, never by any chance going further than the palace-garden, and even avoiding visitors, which, when I reproached her for, remonstrating against her ruining her health and spirits, she only answered that it was pleasanter for her to live thus. I said no more, tacitly avoiding the only subject upon which there was not entire confidence between us.

Once or twice I found her in tears when Queen Catherine was alone with her, and was slightly piqued to see that they changed their conversation when I entered ; still I knew I was wrong, and overcame this weakness, perhaps the more readily because I was beginning to think much of a subject which soon entirely engrossed and perplexed me.

I saw the influence the Queen was exerting over Alice, and, what vexed me not a little, that Catherine’s confessor was more frequently with her, and generally took great pains to occupy Alice’s attention. I found she took pleasure in hearing him speak, and also in reading the books which he lent her. At last my conviction became so strong, that I could forbear

no longer, and finding myself alone with her in the garden, opened my heart to her, beseeching her not to trust in the Romanists.

I saw she was touched, and that a struggle was going on as to the proper course for her to pursue; at last she led me to the grotto, and spoke more openly.

"Mary," she said, drawing me closer, "you are kinder to me than I deserve. I have been, as it were, your sister for long, and yet I have never spoken to you of the great sorrow of my life. I have often intended to do so, but pride kept me silent. It is a long story, Mary dear, and painful to me, but you can forgive and forget all that is wrong. Years ago, when I was only seventeen, I went to visit an aunt of my father's, to whose only son I had been almost promised from my birth. I had never seen my cousin, and when my father once spoke of it, he did it so carelessly that I thought it a jest, and cared nothing about it. When I went to stay with my aunt, however, and saw the way I was received, and, more than all, discovered her son was almost an idiot, I became frightened, and wrote to my father, requesting him to take me home. After waiting a long while, I heard from my aunt that he had accepted an embassy to Germany, and would be absent some months, during which I was to remain with her. I forgot to tell you that my aunt had a step-daughter, a few years older than I was. Well, just at this time a gentleman arrived, the owner of a tower and property close to Branksom. He came regularly, and I soon began to

feel the influence of his presence. At first, I imagined he came as my cousin Matilda's lover, but he soon undeceived me, telling me he only loved me. I was blinded by own feelings, and let him guide me as he wished. By his directions I affected attachment to my imbecile lover, while he himself paid equal court to Matilda, thus lulling my aunt's suspicions, and gained a power over me which I could not shake off. Days and weeks passed on, and Lord Woodstock . "

"Who?" I exclaimed.

"Lord Woodstock, the man of whom I am speaking," said Alice, looking at me with a surprised air.

"Why, he was the most notorious man at Court," I said, startled into forgetfulness of her feelings.

"I know it now, dear ; but remember I met him in the quiet country, and treated as a son by my nearest relation. How could I know his real character, dear ? How suspect one I loved with my whole heart. We met at all hours, and always managed to have a portion of the day alone—he cleverly silencing all tongues, and blinding even my aunt's eyes. At last the day of reckoning came : an old servant arrived to conduct me to my father, and then my aunt bade me publicly affiance myself to her son ; I refused ; she insisted ; and at last, seeing I was determined, left me, to plan a still stronger attack. That evening, as usual, I stole out to meet Woodstock, and in a perfect agony of desperation told him what had occurred, and entreated him to tell me the meaning of my aunt's words—that *he* could not marry me. A strange expression stole over his face, and even then repelled me as I hung

upon his answer. Again I asked, and at length the answer came—

“‘Why can we not love each other without being married?’ The words fell like lead upon my heart. I looked in his face, doubting my ears, and thinking he jested with me, I asked again.

“‘I am married already,’ he muttered hoarsely. ‘There, you know the worst now.’

“The earth gave way beneath me, and I clung to the seat by which we stood; he touched me, but I struck his hand away. There was a barrier of fire between us. The words ‘Married already!’ were all I heard.

“I do not yet exactly know how I got home, but for weeks I lay in a raving fever. When I recovered, my aunt told me, with a sort of triumph, that Lord Woodstock had actually been privately married to her daughter after coming to Branksom. My poor cousin Harry used to sit with me hour after hour, and I soon saw that his whole mind was now filled with the one idea of revenge; it was his one thought, and hourly he meditated upon the means of doing so most effectually.

“The day before I was to leave Branksom, my Lord Woodstock returned somewhat unexpectedly from London, and entering by the garden came upon me unawares. I could not move away, and he seemed too much startled to do so; hesitating for an instant, he was about to turn, when my cousin came up, a bright fire rushed to his eyes, as he sprang forward, and laying his hand upon the other’s shoulder, pushed

him down upon his knees, and bade him ask my pardon. Woodstock saw there was no use resisting, and obeyed. This was not enough; he rose to his feet, but my cousin broke forth into a torrent of reproach, hurling the deeds of the past one by one in the traitor's face, until, growing desperate, he struck poor Harry; in one instant he was writhing on the ground, while the madman knelt upon his breast, and held a knife gleaming in the sunshine. For a moment I thought it was all over, and threw my arms round Harry. By God's help I dragged him back; I had scarcely made him relinquish his hold, when I saw Woodstock level a pistol, and the next a sharp pain in my side, and the report showed I was hit. The bullet had passed through my side, but poor Harry was safe."

"Was that the reason of your lameness?" I asked, breathlessly.

"Yes, darling but you know my story now, Mary, and can perhaps pity me."

Alice leant her head upon my shoulder, I trying to say something to comfort her, and at the same time warn her of his return, so that any day they might meet. Alice's gentle face flushed crimson with passion, as she said, in a low voice—

"If I meet him I shall be revenged. I know *that* of him which will make him tremble before me. I saw poor Matilda upon her deathbed, and

Here a footstep in the outer room made her break off suddenly, and I was left to guess the rest.

Alice's story had a depressing influence over me for

a long time. I could not hear her voice or look at her without remembering it all, and lived in continual dread lest they should meet, for, although she never in any way alluded to it again, I could see by the stern expression that often stole across her features, and the flush that rose when any stranger entered, that it was her constant thought.

The King and Queen, although professing great interest in, and affection for Catherine, seldom or ever visited her, sending messages frequently, but rarely coming personally.

The King, I believed, had much to do, and now more than ever, as rumours began to float about of a threatened rising headed by the Duke of Monmouth. At first little notice was taken, but as the alarm increased, a few soldiers were added to the regiments, and the ships put in better trim, but so quietly was the rebellion managed, that the Duke had landed at Lyme, in Dorsetshire, and been proclaimed, before the King was really alive to his danger.

The Duke of Albemarle assembled a regiment in Devon, and marched to Axminster, but finding his men deeply attached to Monmouth, and ready to change sides upon the least excuse, he thought it prudent to take them out of the way by retiring.

The rebels reached Taunton unopposed. Here they were received with open arms, and Monmouth found himself at the head of six thousand men, and obliged to decline the services of as many more, from the lowness of his exchequer. This seemed to give him little uneasiness, and, content with his present security,

he paid no attention to what was going on ; so that the intelligence of the landing of six regiments, recalled from Holland, took him by surprise, and spread consternation amongst his men. He was deserted at the same time by one of his best generals, Fletcher, the master of Saltoun, who, from an accident arising from his hasty temper, was obliged to leave the troops. They were attacked by the King's men at Sedgwick, and completely defeated.

Monmouth fled, and, after going through various disguises and many dangers, was taken prisoner and carried to London. The whole populace turned out to meet him, receiving him with tears and lamentations, for it is well known that he had made himself thoroughly beloved and admired by the people. He was thrown into the Tower, and executed almost directly as a traitor.

Judge Jeffries was despatched with royal permission to use every means of punishing the rebellious natives of the west ; and ere long the court and town were ringing with the cruelty and vengeance of this terrible judge.

CHAPTER XXVI.

“What a tide of woes
Comes rushing on this woful land at once.

* * * * *

Gentlemen, we will muster men. If I know
How or which way to order these affairs.”

SHAKESPEARE.

It now appeared, from the success attending King James's plans, that England would soon regain the position she had lost during the easy and inglorious reign of his predecessor.

From our retirement, Queen Catherine and I watched the tide of events with great anxiety, and mine was much increased by the affection I had for my Church which King James despised, while he furthered everything connected with the Romanist faith, even requesting parliament to abolish the *Test* law, to enable him to forward his interests.

While these public events occupied so much of our attention, a drama was enacting around me that almost made me forget even this—the threatened fate of my country.

I said Alice had been yielding much to the influence of the Queen's confessor, and though I had thought but little of it at first, my fears began to be awakened, and at last, to my intense sorrow, I felt

convinced that ere long she would adopt the Romanist creed.

The course before me was a difficult one. She never gave me an opportunity to converse with her upon the subject, so seeing nothing else for it, I let Lord Carmarthen know. He heard it with infinite pain, and questioned Alice, but only learnt from her that his influence was gone. Walter wrote, remonstrating warmly, but in vain ; opposition seemed to hasten matters.

In a few days Alice made her public choice of the Church, and became so enrapt in her religious works, that I seldom saw her ; still, there was a vacillation in her plans and deportment that puzzled me, giving me now and then hopes that she had already seen the error of her way. To me, however, she never spoke seriously, not even when I asked her if she felt happier now ; her only answer was to jest at my anxiety, or tell me she could look after her own interests better than any one for her.

My astonishment was complete when she told me she was appointed maid of honour to the Queen. I felt naturally surprised at her thus wilfully seeking the presence of Lord Woodstock, and asked her the question.

"I am the wronged," she said ; "let him beware."

So I felt still more uneasy, and would most gladly have seen her ill again, to save her from what I feared would lead to trouble and sorrow.

She left us, however, and her new duties taking up

so much of her time, I saw her but seldom, though the excitement created by her beauty and talents reached us through Ronald Stewart, and even he for a time spoke so warmly that—— but no matter, dear reader. I was a woman, and felt like one.

When I noticed Ronald's admiration for Alice, I avoided speaking of her, fearful lest I should show how much I felt, and he, feeling guilty, did so likewise. Thus it was that for a length of time I heard no more of her.

My heart reproached me afterwards for my distrust and jealousy, particularly when I saw her again, and heard her account of her own heart.

It would seem that the desire of revenging herself upon Lord Woodstock had led her to this act, and as far as events had gone, her wish was being gratified. He was her slave, her servant, anything that she willed, seeming only to exist in the light of her smile,—and a more capricious smile could scarcely have been chosen.

Poor Alice was miserable, living upon a false excitement, and with a passion burning at her heart, sapping the spring of life itself. She passed day after day, running headlong in the same race. Poor child ! as she lay sobbing in my arms, begging me to let her sleep there for an hour, I could have wept with her, but my tears were held back. She had spoken of Ronald as her friend, and my love grew cold at my heart.

She saw my restraint, and besought me to tell her what caused it, but I could not ; I was ashamed of it,

and yet I cherished it until I almost hated myself for this very weakness.

The Queen took much interest in all that occurred at Court, and though she said nothing, I knew she was watching an opportunity of retiring to her own country.

Lord Inveresk brought us daily intelligence of what went on, so that we seemed to live almost in the world, although in reality we seldom went beyond the gardens.

Though we were at peace, the world was convulsed by faction, and the rashness of King James threw the Protestant Church into consternation, for not content with privately favouring the Romanists, he took every opportunity of distinguishing them honourably, before and in place of the Protestants. Strange as it may appear to those who know the Scotch as they are now, there were more converts to the Romanists, or, as a great historian says, the Court religion, in that country than in England—the example set by the Earls of Perth and Murray was followed by many of their countrymen. To all appearance Scotland was to be essentially the King's country.

In Ireland matters took a darker turn. General Talbot had been rewarded by the Earldom of Tyrconnell, and placed at the head of the government, a post by no means to be courted, as week after week fresh rumours of the disaffection in that country came across the Channel: the people, it was said, were arming in all parts, and taking flight by hundreds to England.

It was in vain to preach patience and care to James: completely led away by what he deemed religion, he cared little for the life or liberty of his subjects, and at length almost paralysed the country by breaking out openly against the heads of the Church.

The bishops were by his order brought to trial; the jury dare not refuse to sit upon them, but unanimously pronounced a verdict of acquittal.

The birth of the Prince of Wales shattered the strengthening hopes of the Protestant party, and brought to a stop their correspondence with the Prince of Orange, who, with his Queen, looked with a covetous eye upon the throne of England, and took no small pains to ingratiate themselves with those Englishmen that fell in their way.

A constant intercourse was kept alive between the Hague and the disaffected party in England. Stories would occasionally be whispered, and letters discovered, that kept the King in continual anxiety.

The health of my dear friend, the Queen Catherine, began to give me much uneasiness. She grew tired of her confinement, voluntary though it had been, and took a fancy to driving in the parks.

This was a relief to me, as now that she kept me so constantly in her presence, I felt it rather an irksome life, and often longed ardently for the fresh air and wild hills again.

A whole year passed by as drearily as well can be imagined. There was absolutely nothing save *looking on* at the history of our country to enliven us.

Lord Inveresk's visits had been seldom, his time

being occupied in more important duties. When he did come, I felt happier for days after, and unconsciously let myself dream a bright dream of happiness, such as I thought I had lost for ever. Yet it was all uncertainty, and I tormented myself by all kinds of perverse imaginations; blinding myself by this to the truth, which every one else round me had seen so long.

It happened that at the close of this dreary year, Ronald Stewart was despatched upon an embassy to France. When he returned, he hastened to us, and gave us a merry description of the French Court. His manner towards me made my heart beat faster.

As he talked of home, and looked at me, I felt the blood rush to my face. Nor was I less confused when the Queen, saying she would rest awhile, left us alone.

The door had scarcely closed, when Ronald rose, and coming up to me, put a little casket in my hand, saying—

“This is a gift for you, Mary. Will you wear it for my sake?”

There was something in the tone of his voice that made my hand tremble as I took the velvet case, and began to open it; but ere I did so, he laid his hand on mine, and said—

“Promise, Mary; promise first.”

And I said, “I will.”

He helped me to unlatch it, and raised the coronet it contained, placing it upon my head. Then leading me to a mirror, he said—

“It is a Countess’s coronet, Mary, and belonged to my mother. Will you wear it?”

The room seemed to swim round with me ; a strange sense of happiness rushed into my heart ; his arm encircled me, his eyes gazing into mine, where I suppose he found an answer, for he kissed me and whispered—

‘Thanks and blessings upon you, darling. I am the happiest man in England.’

CHAPTER XXVII.

“There’s a bliss beyond all that the minstrel has told,
When two that are linked in one heavenly tie,
With heart never changing, and brow never cold,
Love on through all ills, and love on till they die.”

MOORE.

Now began a new life for me, a life in which self was lost sight of in all absorbing love and devotion to another.

My very soul seemed animated and renewed—by-gone years faded away as a dream, serving rather, from their many trials, to make the present more delightful; and when I thought, as I often did of the dark days of my youth, I owned that they had been sent with a purpose, for, as a storm purifies the atmosphere, so, spiritually, these troubles had left my heart holier and happier withal, though I felt lonely and depressed doing my duty, because it was my duty, not my pleasure.

I felt pleasure in nothing—yet all this void was filled—the storms, darkness, and weariness faded, my old heart passed away, and all things became new.

Ronald knew my heart, even as I did myself, and I never hid a thought from him.

There was no one to consult as to my marriage, save her who had planned it long ago, and as events thick-

ened round us, the throne tottered upon its foundation, we thought it advisable to hasten matters ; so my wedding-day was fixed at once, leaving me but a short period in which I considered myself affianced.

It is a strange thing, that step from freedom to the gentle and endearing enslavement of an engagement, to feel your actions, nay, your very thoughts, are no longer your own, but are, by right, another's, and everything you do reflects upon that other.

The preparations for my wedding amused Queen Catherine, and forced her once more into public.

I myself resolutely declined appearing at Court, although King James, after congratulating Ronald upon his good fortune in obtaining such a bride, requested him to urge me to appear.

Alice, too, came and begged me to do so, bringing me word from the Queen that my presence would gratify her. Still I refused, and quieted Ronald's petitions by saying I would go when I had a right to wear the pearl coronet. So what could he do but give me my own way ?

I said before I had seen little or nothing of Alice during all this time, but now she again came to me as of old, and it was then I heard some account of what had happened to her during the interval. Upon her return to Court she had for a period followed the principle I had been told of before with respect to my Lord Woodstock.

After some time she slightly relaxed in her demeanour, and allowed him to converse with her gradually appearing to be interested, until he, growing

confident of his success, saw fit to propose himself in marriage. Now was the moment for victory.

So well did she feign happiness, that, without committing herself, she let him believe his proposal would be accepted.

Acting upon this, he made preparations for the wedding, taking care to make every one aware of what he considered a great conquest.

Alice steadily avoided meeting him in private for some time, and taking an opportunity in the presence of the Court, she awaited his approach, and openly refused his salutation, doing it with such an air of disdain and contempt, that a smile was seen even upon the King's face, in whose favour my lord had ingratiated himself considerably.

The scene was put a stop to by Alice's father, who till then had remained silent, but now spoke out, and in the most eloquent terms appealed to the King for justice for the deserted wife and child of my Lord Woodstock.

The King was startled, my lord grew deadly pale, and, swearing an angry oath that he would be revenged, abruptly left the presence.

The next day he received the King's permission to retire to his country seat for a time ; and Alice continued the reigning beauty, admired and respected by bad and good, and once more for a time my friend ; yet, in spite of her seeming gaiety, I learned that she had determined on retiring to a convent, and, fondly as I loved her, this news distressed me much, both for my own and her father's sake, and I was deeply affected

when he came to me and begged, even with tears, that I would endeavour to convince her of the errors of the Church which she had chosen.

Alas ! I knew it full well, and had wept many a tear when I thought of Ronald belonging to it, but I trusted my influence would overcome, and that I might make him one with me in faith, although I was obliged to keep this carefully shut up in my heart, until the time should arrive when I could say—"Thy God is my God, where thou livest I shall live, and where thou diest I shall die."

My wedding was fixed for the first week in September. Softly and peaceably the days passed in the home I was in ; not a breath of the storms which were even then hourly growing fiercer, and threatening the country, penetrated within its precincts.

Every day brought the same happiness—a visit from Ronald Stewart and a little more consultation about something connected with the important day.

I noticed too that the Queen Dowager grew brighter and happier, but soon heard the true cause, in that she had determined to go back to Portugal, where she would meet with comfort and respect.

In this country she had met with neither ; and, strange as it may seem, there had of late arisen a storm of calumnies. The skeletons of old stories had been forced before the public, and long-forgotten gossip awakened from its sleep ; in fact, men began to pity King Charles now that he was dead, finding out, according to their own version, that he had great excuse for his profligate behaviour ; nay, so openly were

these scandalous libels pronounced, that the Queen Dowager was publicly insulted in the streets of London.

Unable to endure the pain thus caused her, she gave up her drives, and remained a close prisoner until the time she should be permitted to seek an asylum in her native land.

Thus the preparations for my wedding were slightly retarded, and saddened by the sorrows of the Queen, who felt most deeply the malignity that seemed to pursue her through everything, and well knew to whom she ought to attribute this continued persecution ; so that when the Princess Anne paid her hypocritical visits of condolence, she invariably refused to receive her, fearful, she told me, of giving that lady the gratification of seeing that she felt and appreciated her underhand revenge.

At last the important day arrived. The sun shone forth bright and beautiful as the middle of summer—not a cloud dimmed the clear blue sky, or threw a shadow over my hopes of happiness, and when Ronald clasped me in his arms and called me his “own dear wife,” my heart rose in thanks to Him who had granted even more than I had dared to hope for.

At the moment I think I felt a keener pang for the loss of my dear father and mother than ever before—the loss of not having them to participate in my happiness. In my sorrow I had felt it a sort of relief that they had been spared from sharing in it, but now, in the fulness of my joy, I found there was a dreary blank without them—a void I could never fill

up, as the greater my own happiness the more prominent would the want of their participation become.

But I am talking sadly, when I ought to be making the most of this sunshine—the bright days of my wedded life.

For a time, Ronald devoted almost himself entirely to me, never leaving me for an instant, but this was not permitted to last.

News of the landing of the Prince of Orange reached us even in the quiet retreat we had chosen, and utterly confounded by the realization of his worst fears, Ronald made up his mind to proceed to London.

At first he tried to prevail upon me to remain behind ; this, however, I strenuously opposed. What could I do away from him ? Why should not I share his dangers ? I had nothing in the world to live for but him, and my place was at his side in weal or woe. My husband listened to my entreaties, and consented to my accompanying him.

Time being of the greatest importance, he consulted me as to the possibility of riding the whole way, and although it was years since I had mounted a horse, I trusted my strength would hold out, and I advised him to do so ; but I had overrated my powers, and ere I had travelled twenty miles I was so much fatigued that I could not proceed.

Ronald would have risked all, and stayed to accompany me in a coach, which we found was to be procured, but I would not permit him to run the risk of being absent when every mile we proceeded spoke more truly of the confusion everything was in.

Troops of disorganized and half-drunken soldiers travelled about demanding accommodation in the name of the King ; riotous labourers were banding together, and anxious to partake of any advantage which might occur, hastened to Devonshire to meet the invading army.

All these things increased Ronald's dread of leaving me alone, but his first duty was to his King.

I endeavoured to appear cheerful, so as to keep up his spirits, and at last succeeded so far as to persuade him to pursue his journey alone.

I had with me my man servant and my tiring woman.

We set out an hour or two after my husband, and reached our next resting-place without interruption.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

“The King of Heaven forbid, our lord the King
Should so with civil and uncivil arms
Be rushed upon.”—SHAKESPEARE.

WE had scarcely been established there, when an immense body of men rode into the town, shouting “William of Orange !” and “Down with the Papists !”

No one, however, echoed their cry, and, meeting with neither opposition nor encouragement, they dispersed to the various inns, and seemed determined to enjoy the good things of this world.

I was watching at the window, when an officer cantered into the yard, at the head of twelve or thirteen men, armed to the teeth. He was a very handsome man, and mounted upon a splendid charger, whose fiery disposition showed the command his rider had over him.

As he came toward the inn-porch a little child ran across the road, startling the horse, who began to rear and plunge frightfully ; this the rider bore with seeming carelessness for a while, but not appearing to regain any power over the animal by his patience, he drew his sword, and struck him between the ears with the hilt.

Down came horse and rider, the latter evidently not hurt, for he sprang to his legs immediately, while the poor animal lay stunned and trembling on the ground.

His master seized the bridle, and pulled it passionately, all the time swearing loudly at the helpless brute ; but hearing something like a laugh from some one near him, he turned round, and, with a terrible curse, inquired what he laughed at.

The man stood silent for an instant, then raising his head, he answered quietly—

“ At you, my lord.”

This unexpected rejoinder for a moment silenced the angry captain, but the next, with a voice actually trembling with passion, he demanded the soldier's name.

Again the answer silenced him, and even made his flushed face grow pale. Apparently driven frantic by passion, he pulled out a pistol, and, levelling it at him, would have fired, had not an officer sprung forward and laid his hand upon the weapon, too late, however, to do more than alter the course, the bullet passing high over the man's head, who brought his hand to his head with a military salute, and said in a loud, clear voice—

“ Thanks, my lord, for this second trial of my courage.”

As the man spoke a loud cheer burst from the troop, who, in spite of their commander's scowls, crowded round their comrade to congratulate him on his escape.

The discomfited captain, forgetting his horse, had in the meantime sulkily approached the inn, and I heard him come upstairs with a heavy step, and enter the room adjoining mine.

He was immediately followed by the officer who had prevented him committing murder, who seemed to adopt the plan of letting his passionate friend's wrath subside a little, as I heard his footstep pacing up and down the room, but for a long time no one spoke.

"Why, in the devil's name, did you stop me shooting that fellow?" at last burst from the captain.

"To prevent you being a murderer, and worse—you know what," answered the other, in a low voice.

"Prevent what, you foolish boy? What harm would I have done? No more than in hanging a dog that snarled at my heels. Murderer, forsooth! I wish to God I had nothing worse than that would have been to account for. You'll scarcely think when you are my age that knocking over an impertinent trooper can be called by such a strong name. Egad! you are wiser than I am."

"I thought the man said his name was Lovel; if I mistake not your——"

"Silence!" roared the other, "or, by Heaven, I'll shoot thee too! Am I to be dictated to by a stripling like you? Go and see to the horses; and listen. Send Lovel to me. I had better do so. He might be dangerous now."

All was now silent. I watched the young officer go across the yard to the stables, where the soldiers were busily engaged rubbing down their horses.

A short time elapsed, during which my next door neighbour continued his hasty walk.

The soldier, Lovel, came towards the house, whistling carelessly. I was not the only one who saw him.

I heard the footstep in the next room stop, and the captain (as I supposed him) exclaim—

“Damnation! he is her very image. Oh! that I could shoot them both.” And he ground his teeth with passion, dashing a chair out of his way, as he recommenced his walk.

I began to think it was not right for me to listen, but what could I do? The house was full; they told me I must remain where I was; and I soon became so deeply interested that the idea that I was an eaves-dropper faded away.

“Close the door,” were the next words I heard.

“Now, Mr. Lovel,” said the captain, “I have sent for you to inquire the cause of your mirth.”

There was a pause, and then a deep voice replied—

“I was amused, my lord, partly by the situation of your lordship, and partly by the absurd display of temper.”

“By God! how dare you!” broke in the other, stamping his foot.

“Dare! Lord Woodstock,” thundered the soldier, in a voice that made me start even more than the name. “Dare! you say. I, Edward Lovel, ask you how you dare insult me? Answer me, coward, liar, and traitor, as you are—answer me but this—which is the honest man of us two, George Lord Woodstock or Edward Lovel? I have no title, but I have a reputation that you cannot harm—more, I have a sister, and by all the powers of Heaven, I will see her righted—see her boy owned as your rightful heir before all England. Ay! turn away and gnash your teeth—I

have sworn it. I told the Lady Alice Fenton ; but, remember, she only required a hint. She had a revenge to accomplish, and so have I—so have I !”

Lovel stopped speaking, and for a time I heard nothing—both were silent.

How long this would have lasted I know not, but a troop of cavalry rode into the court, and demanded quarters in King William’s name, and, eager to hear any news, I rushed to the window. This was the second time I had been brought into immediate contact with the rebellion, and the words made my soul thrill, every pulse throbbing with excitement. I leant forward and listened breathlessly, while no idea of my own danger flashed upon me. I cared not for anything at the moment, for in the leader of the party I recognised my Lord Cornbury, grandson of my kind and loyal friend Lord Clarendon.

While I was still watching them with intense interest, the door opened very gently, and the hostess crept in on tiptoe, shutting the door after her.

“Madam, we are lost. These troopers are for the Prince of Holland. They have proclaimed him King through the town, and now come here. We are lost if they discover you, my lady ; and, oh ! grief and sorrow it is to my heart to have such men in my house.”

“Is there no corner I can hide in until they take their departure ?” I asked, thinking of my poor husband.

“Alas ! no place but this room. If you remain perfectly still, my lady, you may escape notice ; lock and

bolt the door, and at daybreak, or before, if you wish, I will come, and you can continue your journey ; for oh ! madam ! I love the King." Then kissing my hand, and repeating her devotion to her King, she left me, and hastened away to prepare a feast for her unwelcome guests.

I had not been long alone when I heard footsteps on the stairs, and loud voices made me aware of the approach of some of the officers. I heard them enter the adjoining room, and greet Lord Woodstock with familiarity.

A perfect chorus of boisterous conversation succeeded, from which the only thing I could gather was a contempt for King James and his adherents. Once they mentioned my husband's name, and my blood tingled as I hung eagerly on the reply. It was this—

"King William has put him down as one of those to be taken prisoner. He is dangerous, for many reasons."

"The beauty of his wife most of all," laughed one.

"Oh, no, the length of her purse," said another ; while a voice I recognised as Lord Cornbury's, said—

"Lady Inveresk is a friend of mine, and by Heaven nothing shall harm her or her's ; she was a ward of my poor grandfather's."

I murmured thanks, and sat wrapt in the meditations these words had aroused.

So engrossed was I that I was only recalled by hearing Alice Fenton's name shouted out as a toast, and it being the custom of that time for the proposer to offer something as a sort of sacrifice to the name, I

heard much merriment at the offering now made, which was followed by a story told by one of them about Sir Charles Sedley, who, having on a very handsome neckcloth, was obliged to follow his host's example and commit it to the flames, much to his disgust. Sir Charles did not forget the occurrence, but waiting patiently for his revenge, he asked a select company to dine, gave them as a toast a reigning beauty, and then turning, called to a doctor to draw a tooth as an offering. (It was a tooth he had long designed having extracted, and took this opportunity of putting the loyalty of his friends to the test.)

As darkness closed in I became weary, and fell into a light sleep, broken every now and then by the shouts and laughter of the soldiers.

About midnight I awoke. All was still. I went to the window, opened it, and gazed out upon the court, with a sense of companionship in the regular tread of the sentries ; but I had not listened long when a voice close at my elbow reached me.

It was that of Lord Woodstock at the open window of the adjoining room. He spoke as if in answer to some question, saying—

“ Why can you not make up your mind ; the lady has deeply injured me, and I only require her disgrace. We must go cautiously to work, or we shall have the whole rabble of priests about our ears.”

“ What do you mean ?” asked the other ; “ what has this to do with Rome ?”

“ Simply that she has joined that Church, and means to retire to a convent.”

"By Jove!" exclaimed the other, "Alice Fenton a nun—why she is the prettiest woman in London—what put this religious fit into the dear little one's head?"

"Disappointment in some love affair," said Lord Woodstock, with a sneer.

The other laughed loudly, saying—"By the Lord she paid you out—you are quits now."

"A truce to your foolery," exclaimed Lord Woodstock, angrily; "we cannot talk here all night. I heard by mere accident that the girl was on her way to some old relative in Wales. My plan is to take her prisoner under pretence of her loyalty, and when I have her under lock and key at Woodstock, I can make my own terms."

"I thought the days of knight-errantry were over. Why, if you had her to-morrow, don't you think her father would find her out; her brother, too, by God! a very fire-eater; and since Montgomery gave him command of his Scotch savages, there is no standing him. I tell you what, these two will give us more trouble than any half dozen of the rest, for, true Protestants though they are, they will stick by the old King."

"A rare virtue now, my Lord," exclaimed another voice; and immediately added, "your swords, gentlemen: I accuse you of aiding and abetting the usurper, William of Orange, and arrest you in King James's name."

There was a considerable commotion, but above it all I heard the same voice again—

"Nay, gentlemen, resistance is of no use, your men have returned to their duty."

"What the devil do you mean?" shouted Lord Woodstock, "my men are——"

"With the King's true soldiers, my lord. They joined us an hour ago, under as brave a trooper as ever crossed a saddle, Captain Lovel."

"Damnation!" muttered Woodstock, through his clenched teeth. "By God, he shall pay for this! Stand off!" he yelled; "off on your peril!" as the soldiers of the King advanced. "Here is my sword, General, only keep your Irish villains off."

"My men are not villains, and will conduct you with due respect to your quarters."

In a few minutes the landlord entered, followed by a general officer, who, from his uniform, I saw belonged to the Irish troops, but I was scarcely prepared for the courtesy of his salutation and gentle address. Apologizing for his intrusion, he begged to know who I was, where I was going, and in what way he could best further my plans. On hearing who I was, he at once threw aside his stately and stiff manner, and making a low bow, said he had much pleasure in making my acquaintance, as he knew my husband well, and valued the honour as all true men must. I now felt more at ease, and asked him to tell me all that was going on.

"You must have been in a very secluded place, madam," he said, "not to have heard what the country has been ringing with. Your husband will reach town just in time for the great council sum-

moned by his Majesty, and at which Lord Inveresk's advice will be most useful."

I acknowledged the compliment, and asked eagerly for more news, but I was hastily cut short by the trumpets sounding. The General looked somewhat angrily out of the window, then waving his hand to one of the troopers, bade them wait.

"Now, madam," said he, turning to me, "pray decide—will you accept my escort as far as Salisbury, where the King is to be directly, or take the chance of pursuing your own journey at leisure? There is little time to think of it. My name is Sarsfield, madam, and by the honour of my country I offer you a safe escort."

There was no necessity to repeat his kind offer—gladly accepting it, in a few minutes I was in the midst of his troopers, and, for the first time in my life participating in the pomp and pride of war.

We proceeded very slowly in consequence of the foot soldiers; and further, having to examine into the temper of the inhabitants of the towns and villages we passed through occupied much time.

On the road we were met by a trooper, who informed us that a party of men under one Campbell, were in our front. Sarsfield seemed to think light of it, and ordering his men to prepare, rode at their head himself, and charged down the highway, where it was said the Prince's adherents were stationed. After a gallop of about a mile they came upon them. Campbell, with a few men, was posted at the end of a little valley; the rest of his troop were placed on each side of the road, sheltered by the hedges. Sarsfield was riding a

pretty little white horse, and galloped forward in front of his men, until he came close to the rebels.

Campbell spoke first, demanding who they were, to which Sarsfield replied—

“For King James.”

“And I for the Prince of Orange,” shouted Campbell, at which Sarsfield, turning to his men, said something in his native tongue, which made them all laugh and join in a wild cheer.

Campbell, a hot-brained highlander, drew his sword, and waving it over his head, shouted “Fire!”

A shower of bullets hailed down from the hedges, and laid many of the Irish troopers in the dust; nay, thrice did this deadly shower rain upon their devoted heads, before they could get at their concealed enemies. They stood the fire with the utmost steadiness, and then charged, sword in hand, on their foes, and would soon have carried all before them, if an alarm had not been started that a reinforcement was hastening up to join the Prince's troops; as the report (which was too true) spread, they paused for a moment in their victorious career, and Sarsfield, seeing that a further advance would only sacrifice his men, drew them off, and we all retired together.

CHAPTER XXIX.

“So shall I taste
At the first the very worst of fortune’s might,
And other strains of woe, which now seem woe,
Compared with loss of thee, will not seem so.”

SHAKESPEARE.

THE next day an escort arrived to take charge of me as far as Salisbury. There I found the King and Court assembled, but evidently all in the greatest confusion. My dear kind husband alone appeared to retain anything like coolness, and earnestly advised the King to concede to the requests of the people. James was, however, completely ruled by what he deemed affection for his religion, and turned a deaf ear to every advice contrary to what he considered the most regal course. A few days of the most intense anxiety passed slowly by. My husband was scarcely ever with me, and I was almost hourly with the Queen, who all at once had conceived a warm friendship for me. During these days the Prince’s army was slowly but surely augmenting its numbers, and advancing closer to our position. Every day, nay, almost every hour, brought intelligence of some defection amongst those we had counted on in the north. Newcastle and Hull were the first to fall away, but the greatest blow was the fact that Bristol, which, from its mercantile importance and situation, was looked upon as second

only to London, had voluntarily received the Lord Shrewsbury; and the Bishop, not content with passive acquiescence, summoned a meeting in the cathedral, and prayed and preached for the success of the Prince's arms. I think the news of the rebellious proceedings of Bishop Trelawney was a great means of making the King decide on leaving Salisbury. The Bishop being a man of great power and influence, there seemed no doubt that his example would form the groundwork of a general movement, even among those churchmen who were most favourably inclined.

Thus, when intelligence was brought that the invading army was within a short distance of Salisbury, King James would listen to no remonstrances, but gave orders to march at once to London.

For the next few hours, the whole town was a mass of confusion; horses and carriages hastening to and fro, blocking up the roads in every direction, the troopers assembling in the open space round the stately old cathedral, and from time to time the trumpets rung out over the tumult of voices. At last the King and Queen, accompanied by the infant Prince and the lords and ladies in waiting, commenced their journey. We reached Andover in the afternoon, and, as the King had determined to keep us there for the night, we had a short rest before us. Much fatigued with her journey, the Queen retired almost immediately upon her arrival, and soon after dining King James followed her; so, for the first time since leaving Gloucestershire, my husband and I were enabled to spend a few hours together. Anxious to avoid the

bustle of the town, we walked beyond its precincts, and, noticing a path strike off into the woods, we gladly turned into it. The path skirted the highway, but was completely concealed from those passing by, the underwood and hedge intervening; so, finding a pleasant green bank, we sat down to talk. We had many things to consult of, and the moon shone full upon us ere we thought of the lapse of time. As we were rising to return, the clatter of horses' feet reached us. Anxious to see who rode so late, my husband bade me crouch down beside him at a thin part of the bushes. We could look out upon the road, which lay like a silver thread in the bright moonlight. We were not kept in suspense long; presently I could distinguish several horsemen; they approached rapidly, and when within a few yards slackened speed, and rode leisurely on, conversing. The two foremost were at opposite sides of the road, and, as they passed, one asked the distance they must go. There was a peculiar accent in his voice that bespoke a foreigner, and my husband clenched my hand fiercely. As the man replied, and the first speaker exclaimed—"Est-il possible?" Ronald half rose, and uttered an oath aloud. The rustling made by his movement, slight as it was, alarmed the travellers, and the man who had answered the first speaker, shouted—"Who goes there?" Of course no answer was given, and my husband made me lie down on the grass.

"Halt!" shouted the same voice; "what was that, sergeant?" "A man's voice, my lord," was the reply. "Form—present—fire!" were the startling orders;

and before I could do more than grasp my husband's hand about a dozen bullets crashed over my head. I shall never forget the long, deep breath that broke from Ronald's breast, as he exclaimed—"Safe, by God!"

I suppose the travellers were satisfied with their kind intentions, and, imagining they had done their work, galloped off.

But it was not until the last echo of their tread had died away that I ventured to raise my head.

"Who was it?" I asked, breathlessly, as Ronald put his arm round me.

"Prince George and Churchill," was his astounding reply. It was indeed the case. They had left the King.

Ronald found James employed at his devotions, utterly unsuspecting of the treachery at work so near him. At first he resolutely refused any belief of such nearbreaking news; but when an examination of their chambers convinced him, his tears broke forth, and, with a passion he had not yet displayed, he cursed the Prince and his leader, for such my Lord Churchill was.

Churchill's character puzzled his contemporaries, and disgusted those who, in after years, could understand his motives and life. Proud to a fault, he would yet lie and cringe for a shilling, daily and hourly forfeiting his honour for some paltry acquisition of seeming power, and all this, while his superlative cunning, aided most effectually by his wife, blinded the eyes of those he cheated. In the present case,

perceiving the fall of James at hand, he forgot his debt of gratitude, and hastened to offer his allegiance to the usurper; but, not content with this hostile movement, he must needs take an underhand measure, and secure a friend in case of a change in the world's opinions, and carry with him his tool and friend—Prince George of Denmark.

Such is man's sincerity.

The first intelligence that met us upon our arrival in London, was the flight of the Princess Anne.

This was, apparently, the climax of the King's troubles. At the moment of Churchill's desertion, he had wept more from anger than grief, but now it was heartrending to see his anguish, and hear his repeated exclamation—

“God help me! my children have forsaken me!”

By degrees he learnt the full particulars of her flight, her anxiety to escape before his arrival, and the incidents that attended this proceeding; and suddenly recovering himself, he sternly bade those around him to remain silent upon the subject, and, going himself to her apartments, burnt everything that bespoke her presence, and, locking the door, threw the key into the garden.

That evening the King sat in council, and, in spite of the anguish gnawing at his heart, spoke rationally upon the emergency of the moment.

A meeting of the Lords was determined on for the following day, at which he again presided; and though it might have touched any heart to note the havoc one

night's agony had wrought upon his face, he received no token of sympathy.

Of the few he believed would have stood by him to the last, the Lord Clarendon was one (the successor to my dear and honoured friend), but he, to the amazement of friends and foes, stood up, and, seeming to disregard all reverence for his sovereign's presence, exclaimed bitterly against Popery and the government, asserting that, in spite of his pretence to the contrary, the King was even then raising a troop in London.

In vain did James indignantly deny the imputation. Clarendon's mind was made up; he had already gone too far to draw back; and, confident in his own influence over those still in semblance faithful, he boldly threw a doubt upon the King's veracity.

I never saw my husband so roused as when he recounted the above scene, and told me of the insults heaped upon the fallen King, whose misfortunes awoke in his breast an affection and pity he had never felt till now. Day and night his hand and head were at work. He spent hours in talking to the soldiers, exciting them to stand firm to their King; but what could one voice do against millions?

Time went on. William's troops were advancing on London. The very menials of the palace began to show disrespect for the already dethroned King, whose only safety seemed in an instantaneous flight. But this he refused, and with a perseverance unusual to one of his family, he persisted in awaiting the arrival of

the Prince, but willingly consented to let his Queen and child seek an asylum in France. Sadly against my inclination I was chosen to accompany her Majesty, but my husband represented to me the comfort he would feel when assured of my safety, so I consented.

CHAPTER XXX.

“ Farewell ! a word that must be, and hath been,
A sound which makes us linger—yet farewell !”

BYRON.

“ Farewell ! There is a boding sadness in the word
Few can disguise, and every one must feel.”

WE departed from London in the midst of the most fearful storm I remember to have seen, and through it all the poor Queen sobbed and bemoaned her fate, while the poor infant, frightened by the rain and wind, screamed so piteously, that we were forced to hold a handkerchief over his mouth, lest attention should be thus attracted to our movements. It was a great relief when we reached the ship appointed to carry us to our destination ; and seeing that my time was completely engrossed by the Queen, I could not dwell upon my own state, but was obliged to listen to her lamentations, and forget my own.

We were received by Louis himself, and installed in a wing of the palace until suitable arrangements were made at St. Germain ; and then commenced my real trials.

The mirth of those near me, in which the Queen soon joined, with apparently utter disregard of her late grief, saddened me still more ; but being unable to

withdraw myself from these scenes, on account of my attendance upon her Majesty, I felt doubly disheartened, and longed earnestly for the end of the hourly weakening hold of James upon the throne. True, I had only beggary and exile to expect, but my heart would be at rest. What did I care for the pomps and riches of the world, in comparison to happiness and rest?

It was with the greatest reluctance I took any part in the daily fêtes and pageants of that gayest of all Courts, feeling my pale, wo-begone face, upon which I could not put a mask of smiles, was quite out of place. It was with much astonishment I saw her Majesty, Queen Mary, throw aside the stiffness she had assumed in England, and seeming to forget her dignity as well as her supposed sorrows, join heart and hand in every amusement that took place.

Days followed each other slowly, and no English news reached me for such a length of time, that suspense became almost intolerable, when it was relieved by a messenger arriving from King James, with intelligence that, in attempting to escape, he had been seized, and was now a prisoner. The messenger also informed us that the guards had at last declared for the Prince of Orange, who was even now actually in London. We had scarcely heard the intelligence, when crowds of Roman Catholic refugees arrived, and made my blood run cold with the description they gave of the state of London—how the mob paraded the public streets, breaking open the chapels, and ransacking the houses of any one suspected of Papacy. A few days of intense anxiety followed, during which my very life

seemed departing, and I felt quite helpless, and almost hopeless, utterly prostrate with fear. But God was merciful to me, and after a week of agony, a voice sounded in my ears whose tones brought me to life again. My husband was with me, safe, and, what was as precious, had preserved his honour to the end, having accompanied the King in his last and successful escape.

I cannot attempt to tell an accurate history of the time we spent at the French Court, a Court the history of which is so well known, that to say that my husband and I were among its honoured guests, is to tell all that happened. And yet, with all the show of hospitality and gaiety, there was a chord jarring in our hearts—we were exiles, and dependent upon the bounty of a foreigner—so that when an opportunity seemed to serve, and deputations from those who remained faithful in Ireland came over, my husband lent his voice to a number who advised an attempt to regain the forfeited kingdom, and even volunteered himself to go over to ascertain the feeling of the Scotch.

I was again left alone—this time the parting was even more trying than before—but he had taught me to feel with him in regard to his duty, and although I expected to be a mother before I could by any possibility see him again, I parted with him as cheerfully as I could, and having obtained their Majesties' permission to retire from attendance, went to a pretty little place not far distant, where I could be alone as much as I pleased.

A fortnight after my dear husband went, my baby

was born, and no one but a mother can understand the feeling with which I gazed at my firstborn ; and from my inmost soul thanked God for His precious gift, praying for strength to deserve the trust. Hour after hour, as I lay weak and helpless, I looked at the innocent little creature beside me, and pictured to my mind what his after-life might be, anticipating the pride with which my husband would greet his little son.

Oh, how I longed for his return, and day after day trusted to gain strength ! But, alas ! that strength came not. Weeks went by, and I still lay prostrate. Doctors came and went, and talked to me and of me, but all shook their heads, and said they hoped time would enable me to overcome my weakness. Full of the expected return of my beloved, and the daily improvement in my darling baby, I thought little of my own case, saving a feeling of disappointment that I could not be up and stirring to welcome him home.

At last he came, and as he clasped me in his arms my bliss was complete. With a pride I still feel the echo of thrilling in my heart, I pointed to the rosy little face nestling at my side, and watched his as he bent, half in curiosity, half in wonder, over our child. When he had leisure to tell me of his adventures, it seemed Scotland had but slight hopes of any success in the cause of the exiled king, so that the wisest measure appeared to take the advice given by Lord Tyrconnel, and proceed to Ireland immediately.

After much deliberation, and messages to and fro, this plan was decided on. Louis offered to provide ten thousand men to assist the King, but this James

obstinately refused, saying he "would win through his subjects' valour, or perish in the attempt." Louis laughed at this empty boast, and gave ships, arms, and money, all the more willingly, I believe, that they helped to rid him of an expensive and troublesome guest. In parting he gave voice to his feelings by a wish that was well understood, namely, that the best thing he could wish was never to see his brother again.

Ronald accompanied the King, and full of hope and excitement, bade me a gay farewell. My baby lay in my arms as he did so, and when the last sound of his departing steps ceased, God only knows the agony with which I laid my head upon the innocent little infant's breast and wept. A soldier's wife will understand my feelings as I lay following my husband in thought.

Week followed week, and then we heard of the terrible siege of Londonderry. The next news, however, was so inspiriting, that the bells of Nôtre Dame rang a joy peal, and divine service was held to pray for success to their arms. Then, however, the Almighty showed his displeasure. Defeat after defeat harassed the King's arms, until the disastrous day of the Boyne, when his hope received its death-blow ; and ere many days were over, King James returned to St. Germain's, a broken-hearted, homeless man.

* * * * *

I have little more to say. The days of my trial were past, and for many, many years, my husband and I lived in peaceful retirement, educating our two boys,

and instilling into their young minds the seeds of virtue, truth, and honour.

But I have seen my brightest hopes decay. First my children were taken from me, both in one short year, and then my husband fell a victim to a complaint of long standing in his family, that fearful and fatal disease, consumption. I watched him fading from my side, with an agony only an experienced one can judge of—and at last I was alone. God had given me joy and blessing beyond all things, and having let me taste the happiness, He had called them all away, to inherit eternal rest.

Reader, my tale is told, and the end and object of my telling it happily accomplished, if it has convinced one heart that, in this checkered world, our joys and griefs are pretty equally balanced, and that—as I said before—

“Every sorrow comes saddled with a blessing.

THE END.

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